



PlayStation®2

PSP™  
PlayStation Portable

PLAYSTATION®3

# PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

## Call of Duty 4

Forget WWIII! Think state-of-the-art modern warfare!

4



FREE  
PS2 DISC! PLAY  
GOWII

31 PS3  
REVIEWS!

WORLD'S FIRST REVIEW!

## THE DARKNESS

Un-freaking-believable! The next generation has arrived and it is smoking hot!

## BATTLE OF THE SEXES

How to get your girlfriend gaming! Top tips inside!

WIN!

\$3,660

worth of games!

PS2 PERFECTION!

## Tomb Raider Anniversary

Why it's the must-have PS2 game! First review!

HANDS-ON!

JUICED 2

Can the new kid in town leave Need for Speed for dead?



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PSP.  
PlayStation Portable

PG

Mild  
violence

[playstation.com.au](http://playstation.com.au)



# RATCHET & CLANK

## SIZE MATTERS

Ratchet and Clank are back in their biggest, smallest adventure yet – shrunk down to microscopic size and tooled up with a devastating array of weaponry.

THERE IS NOTHING SMALL ABOUT THIS GAME



September 1951

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We have been fighting the enemy for three months. Our troops are becoming fatigued. They began to break through all our defences.

The fear in my brother's eyes carries me through from hour to hour.



**RESISTANCE**  
FALL OF MAN

**INSOMNIAC**  
GAMES

[playstation.com.au](http://playstation.com.au)

[resistancefallofman.com](http://resistancefallofman.com)

*This is living*



September 1951



We must stay true to our belief. A belief that we can crush this evil plague sweeping across our land.

The battle is just beginning.

humanity MUST PREVAIL



"Our troops have been slaughtered, Europe has fallen, and the only remaining hope of saving humanity from the Chimera is you Lt Hale ... Good luck".

Resistance: Fall of Man is a first person action game exclusive to the PLAYSTATION 3. It is 1951 and historic warfare collides with a deadly race which is threatening to wipeout all humans. You must take on the role of US Ranger Nathan Hale, and use one of the most amazing arsenals of weaponry ever seen to fight back for mankind.



PLAYSTATION 3

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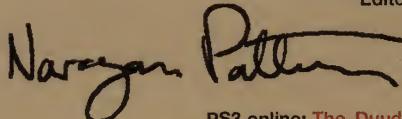


**I**t's been all about the shooters this month, with *The Darkness* and *Call of Duty 4* keeping us firmly in their line of fire. Each one brings its own unique twist to the genre, whether it's heart-devouring demons and dimension-warping black holes or helicopter-controlled airstrikes and state-of-the-art urban conflicts. We'll let you figure out which is which, but the important thing is that both shooters

represent unmissable gaming experiences that drag the FPS genre kicking and screaming into amazing new territory.

In other news, and I know I don't say it often, but throw me in a gasoline shower and toss me a Molotov cocktail if Dave wasn't right on the money with his overwhelming praise for *Oblivion* last month (God, I hope he's not reading this). I've been clocking in some serious hours with that mammoth masterpiece over the last few weeks, much to my TV-deprived wife and unwalked dogs' disappointment. I've built my character into a master-class thief and assassin but I'm having real trouble with this mission where I have to kill a stack of badass warriors, mainly because my areas of expertise are sneaking, hiding in shadows and running away really, really fast. I guess that's what I get for playing like such a little bitch. Dammit. I'm going to have to start all over again aren't I?

**NARAYAN PATTISON**  
Editor



PS3 online: [The\\_Dude](#)

## WHO WE'D REFUSE TO WAR AGAINST...



### LUKE REILLY

Chad would be tough, because it sounds like a real person ("What's Chad ever done to you?" would be the cries) and France would be impossible (they've already surrendered to me once). Probably Ireland though – a stray shell may strike the Guinness brewery. Tear.

PS3 online: [Capt\\_Flashheart](#)



### MARK SERRELS

Germany. Haven't those poor bastards had enough? Sure they were pretty mischievous in the past, but now all they're guilty of is mullets and tight man shorts. Oh and keeping Hasslehoff in show-business. In fact, scratch that. Germany sucks, it's clobberin' time!

PS3 online: [Serrels](#)



### PHILLIP JORGE

Although I'm pretty sure World War III won't be set in the Philippines, it's one place I couldn't bring myself to attack. Mostly because my mum would never forgive me. "Oh Phillip, you never visit... except to INVADE OUR COUNTRY!" Yeah, I'd never live that down. PS3 online: [PhiLLipO](#)



### NICK O'SHEA

Belgium has bought us the world's finest beer, chocolate and waffles, and the piece de resistance, the 'Muscles from Brussels', Jean-Claude Van Damme. I often combine them all by roundhouse kicking people while washing down a tasty dessert with a crisp ale. PS3 online: [Sidochrome](#)



### ANTHONY O'CONNOR

Having been working for (how do I put this delicately?) 'titty mags', I'd refuse to go against the Czech Republic. Why? Because judging by the photos, there's not a single ugly chick in that whole place! Hot, pert, naked ladies seem to be its number #1 export. PS3 online: [stoxys242](#)



### DAVE KOZICKI

Kazakhstan. Imagine looking down the scope, seeing a half-naked Borat, giving you the thumbs up, shouting "Niiiiice!" Its army would be ruthless. After stabbing you with a bayonet, you'd hear a voice saying "My enemy, he's dead... High Five!" PS3 online: [ko-zee-ii](#)

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Official Magazine - Australia

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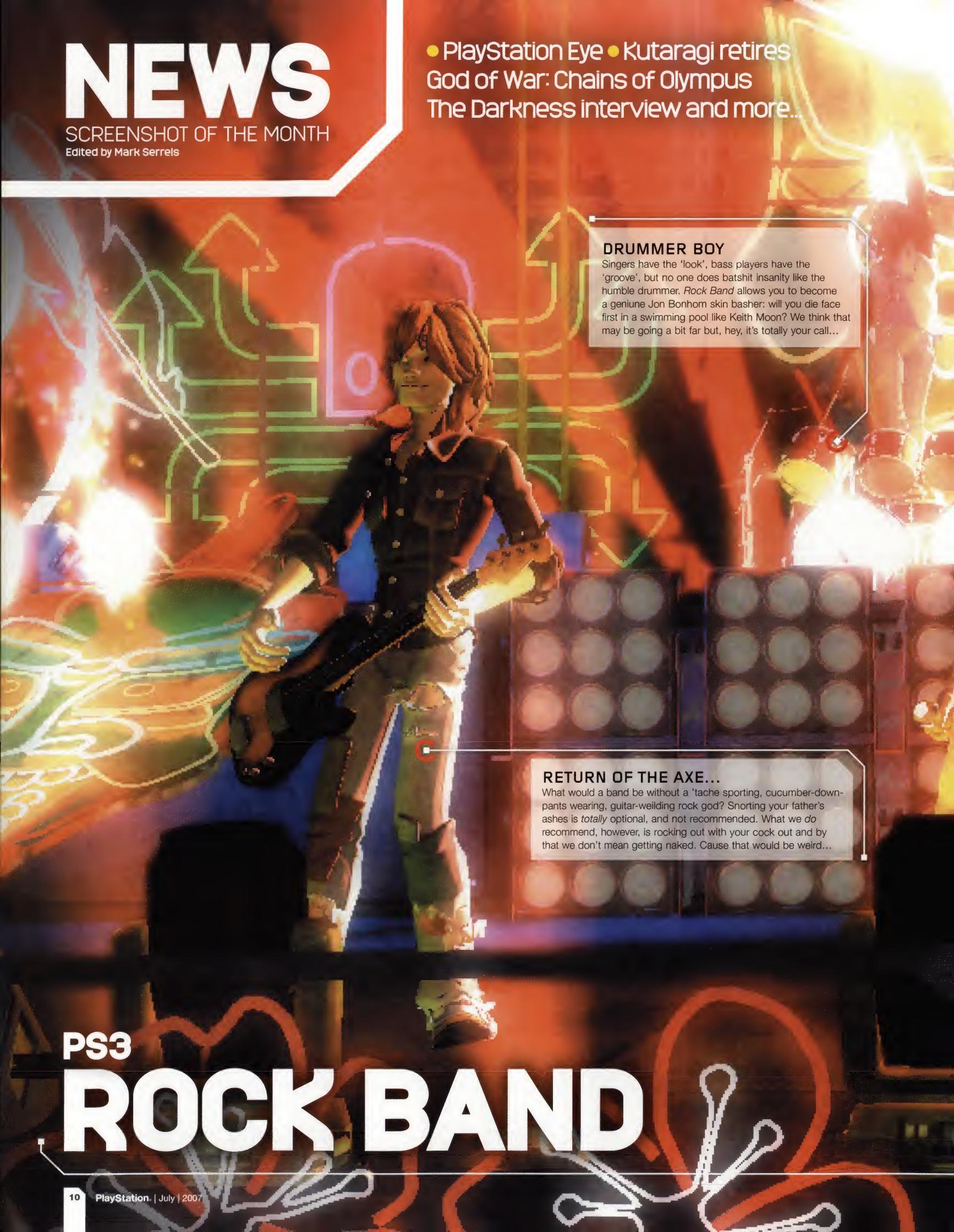
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# NEWS

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

Edited by Mark Serrels

- PlayStation Eye • Kutaragi retires
- God of War: Chains of Olympus
- The Darkness interview and more...



## DRUMMER BOY

Singers have the 'look', bass players have the 'groove', but no one does batshit insanity like the humble drummer. *Rock Band* allows you to become a genuine Jon Bonham skin basher: will you die face first in a swimming pool like Keith Moon? We think that may be going a bit far but, hey, it's totally your call...

## RETURN OF THE AXE...

What would a band be without a 'tache sporting, cucumber-down-pants wearing, guitar-wielding rock god? Snorting your father's ashes is *totally optional*, and not recommended. What we do recommend, however, is rocking out with your cock out and by that we don't mean getting naked. Cause that would be weird...

PS3

# ROCK BAND

■ "What do you call a guy who's always hanging around *real* musicians? A drummer! Geddit?" THWACK! THWACK!



#### THE REAL SINGSTAR?

Tired of your missus always telling you you should do more things together? *Rock Band* is your chance to do so without leaving that comfy groove you've made for yourself on the sofa. Chicks love singing, right? Well, now you can get your girlfriend to join your band as lead vocalist, or maybe even stretch the vocal cords yourself.

#### RANDOM HIPPY CHICK

*Rock Band* also gives you the option of getting on your knees, hair flung back, waving your arms lazily in the air, eyes closed in a drug-induced trance. Well, not really – but what you do in your own time is completely your decision. To be honest, we have no godly idea what this chick is doing, but it looks cool!

FOR THE LATEST GAMING NEWS HEAD TO [WWW.GAMEPLAYER.COM.AU](http://WWW.GAMEPLAYER.COM.AU)

# EYE TO THE SKY

The PlayStation 'Eye' unveiled...

## HISTORY

**Instrumental in attracting** a new audience to gaming, the original EyeToy was a revolutionary little gadget that brought gaming to those a little intimidated by the traditional control pad. Cranking the original EyeToy vision up a notch is Sony's recently announced PlayStation Eye for the PS3.

## TOY NO MORE

The removal of the word toy is no accident. While the PlayStation Eye will still be utilized for games in the same way the EyeToy was, the PS3's iteration of the device looks set to be used for a wide range of multimedia purposes. The Eye is still a toy, but to limit this awesome piece of tech with that moniker really doesn't do this new gadget any justice whatsoever.

## COMMUNICATION

**Featuring the latest** advances in audio-visual technology the PlayStation Eye is like a web-cam on steroids. With a noise-cancelling microphone capable of high levels of sound quality, and two position lens for close up shots, the PlayStation Eye intends to do more than simply open up new methods of control, it could quite possibly revolutionise the experience of both interactive gaming and online communication.

## GAMING

**In addition to** the traditional uses for the original EyeToy the PlayStation Eye, will be used for online gaming, negating the use for a headset, and freeing up gamers for a more natural, social online gaming experience. This could quite possibly end up being one of the Eye's best features, working as a high-end web cam that makes for more personable gaming.

## CREATE

The PlayStation Eye also comes bundled with the 'Eye-Create' software package, which enables owners to take advantage of the wide variety of video capture features available. The Eye is capable of some neat tricks such as time lapse photography, and slow motion; the 'Eye-Create' software is tailor made to help take advantage and create some sophisticated video footage.

## SPECS

**With a high res** of 640x480 at 60fps, or 320x240 at a mind boggling 120fps, calling the PlayStation Eye a sophisticated piece of kit is an understatement. Scheduled for a late winter release we can't wait till this bad boy lands in our laps.



# DIVINE WARMONGER TO LIVE IN YOUR POCKET

**After being shrunk** to mortal size at the start of *God of War II*, Kratos, the undisputed god of action games, will be shrunk again – this time for an all-new adventure on the PSP.

A prequel set before the original PS2 adventure, *God of War: Chains of Olympus* will see Kratos embroiled in another third-person gut cutter full of all the wrath-spitting combos, Leviathan enemies, and scintillating design fans have come to expect from the series. OPS has seen the game in motion and can promise it's set to exceed expectations and redefine the pedigree of PSP titles in general. Kratos moves

with the same fluidity he possesses on the PS2 while showing off a crisp physique and intricate character model. The levels, too, are as epic as ever, packed with open coliseum-like spaces for taking on foes of titanic proportions.

Developed by peerless PSP studio Ready at Dawn, the game is set to run on its Ready at Dawn engine which lofted its recent release, *Daxter*, into the must-have cumulus. Astonishingly Ready at Dawn claims *Daxter* only pushed the system to about 50-60% of its potential, with *God of War: Chains of Olympus* set to improve that figure by a further 20%!

■ Kratos is so hard he made Jack Bauer cry, just by giving him a nipple cripple.



■ When Kratos goes fishin', everyone goes fishin'



GIVEAWAY

# NINJA!

**We love Ninjas** – who doesn't love Ninjas? Besides people who've received a shuriken to the face at the hands of the stealthy buggers, that is. Ninjas are awesome and that's that. Elevating Ninjas even further into the stratosphere of coolness is the potentially amazing *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*. This remake, from Tecmo, takes an already existing classic and pushes it to the uppermost limits of its next gen potential. At a blistering 60 frames-per-second, *Sigma* is undoubtedly one of the smoothest gaming experiences yet.

Taking control of *Dead or Alive*'s Ryu Hayabusa, it is your sworn duty, as the last remaining member of the Dragon Lineage, to retrieve the Dark Dragon Blade from the fiendish Doku. Although set for release on June 29, we are giving OPS readers the chance to get their grubby mitts on 10 copies of the game. All you potential Ninjas have to do is answer this simple question and send the answer under the headline 'Ninja Gaiden Giveaway', following the instructions below.

#### Question:

Which blonde haired vixen from *Ninja Gaiden Black* is now playable in *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*?

- a. Paris Hilton
- b. Rachel
- c. 'Palm'ela 'Hand'erson

#### HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line, or post them to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Include the name of the competition, your name, age, email address, contact number, and more importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close on July 17. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand.

WIN!



## THE TOP 10

The top 10 games we reckon should have gotten more of a look in, but didn't...

By Anthony O'Connor:

- 10 **The Ace Combat series.** This was a fast-paced and surprisingly deep (plot-wise) series. Sure it never reinvented the plane, but it was a tops series.
- 9 **Rogue Trooper.** Man, maybe you kids aren't reading 2000AD anymore or something but what about a heavily armed, blue soldier with talking weapons does not appeal to you? What are they teaching you in school these days?
- 8 **Beyond Good and Evil.** Okay, the game starts slowly with you taking pictures of local fauna, and your piggy friend is a little lame. But dudes, it ends up with monstrous beasts, aliens and a huge, evil conspiracy. Check it out!
- 7 **The Warriors.** Okay, so maybe basing a game on a '70s cult film about urban street gangs wasn't the greatest idea, but watch the movie and enjoy the game. A lot of love went into this and it shows.
- 6 **Manhunt.** Well, we can't really blame you for this as the OFLC went ahead and banned it. And then stripped naked and danced around a sacrificial goat... allegedly.
- 5 **Project Zero 3: The Tormented.** Like a really good sequel this game brought all the strands of the first two together and gave some staff members nightmares for weeks.
- 4 **Yakuza.** It came out at a bad time, and its not without its flaws, but this quirky mix of sandbox game and funky beater is pretty damn cool. Just give it time to grow on you.
- 3 **XIII.** This bizarre game, cel-shaded and based on a Belgian comic book proved just too bizarre for some. We suggest you go back and have another look. This is way ahead of its time. Now is its time. Capiche?
- 2 **Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror.** Seriously, bugger Sam Fisher to hell – this is the best secret agent shooter on the PSP bar none and it has seriously not gotten its due props. Kids, if you own a PSP – buy... this... game.
- 1 **The Thing.** Based on possibly the best horror/sci-fi movie ever made, John Carpenter's *The Thing*, this was a fine continuation of the plot of the movie. The fact that anyone around you could be the Thing, and the trust meter were great ideas. If people had bought enough copies we'd have a no doubt superior sequel by now. Dammit, we want a next-gen *The Thing*!

Foot note: cruise by any decent games store and you could pick most of these up for like twenty bucks a piece. Quick question – you're sitting here reading this... why? Garn, get. Ya young whippersnappers...



■ "Why didn't you call?" "Um, because you're a HIDEOUS MONSTER!"

# INFO NUDGE

Everything else that's fit to print (and some that's not)

## RAPPA'S DELIGHT

As one of the pioneers of the now prominent 'rhythm' genre, the original *Parappa the Rapper* holds a special place in many a gamer's hearts. These types will no doubt be celebrating Sony's recent pledge to bring the freestyle canine to the PSP. Staying true to the distinctive paper thin, 2D art design of the original classic, *Parappa the Rapper* will feature music from Japanese musician Masaya Matsuura.

The game is set for release in July 2007.



## HEAVENLY SWORDS

So, what the hell, there's two of them now? Well, apparently. According to Ninja Theory, the developers behind *Heavenly Sword*, there is a distinct possibility that multiplayer support will squeeze its way onto the anticipated slash-fest. At the moment the team is focusing on polishing up the single-player campaign, but a multiplayer facet may come in the form of a future update on the PlayStation Store.



## THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

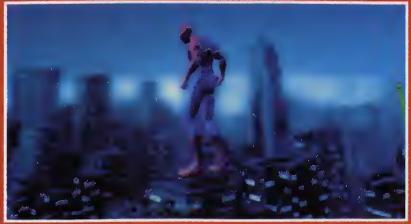
While all eyes are undoubtedly locked on *GTAIV* for the time being, Rockstar has gone and announced another barnstormer for the PS3. The next edition of Rockstar San Diego's *Midnight Club* street racing series is currently in development, set for an early 2008 release. Set in Los Angeles, Rockstar's Sam Houser claimed that they were attempting to "redefine the idea of a completely immersive racing game experience."



## WINNERS

From the comps in OPS #3

**Spider-Man 3 Sony grand prize:** A Potts, thanks for your super Spidey pic. **Spider-Man runners up:** L Yipp, B Sharmat, L Doncon, E Marsh, D Treasure, W Jacobs, K Quach, J Dow, R Andrew, D Herron. **Tomb Raider Anniversary:** L Dawson, B Aguirre, R Tyler, P Birns, R Evans, M Howsam, T Rooy, T Leisen, A Freestone, D Hayward. **300:** H Skinner, J Leggett, S Shaw, H Chu, A Wolski. **Little Britain:** D Vassiliadis, J Mayfield, M Stewart, G Booth, J Nikolovski. **All other winners notified by phone or email.**



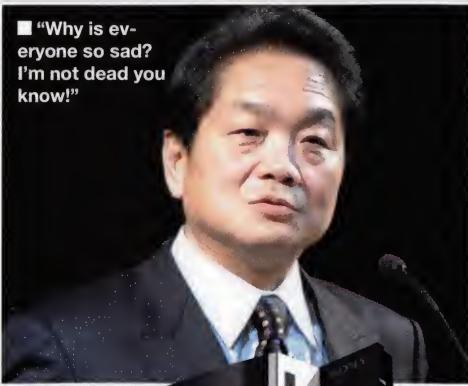
# SAYONARA...

**Ken Kutaragi**, the 'Father of the PlayStation', founder and former president of Sony Computer Entertainment, has recently retired taking up the position of Honorary President of Sony.

Originally a high profile engineer within the Sony ranks, a high profile backstabbing by Nintendo (after it canned a Sony designed CD add on drive for the Super Nintendo) motivated Kutaragi to destroy all competition with the original PlayStation, before becoming the driving force behind all PlayStation products and the leader of the SCE department of Sony.

Kutaragi's major innovation was his constant drive to fit consoles with new innovative technology as opposed to the cobbled together consoles of the past. In this respect he completely revolutionised the gaming industry as we know it, helping build the groundwork for the high powered multimedia consoles we own today.

Despite becoming more famous these past years for his penchant for hyperbolic statements, we prefer to remember the engineering genius that Ken Kutaragi symbolised. Without this man gaming as we know it, would be very, very different. Show your respect.



## GIVEAWAY

## GET WILDER

**WIN!**

**Sequel to original frat-fest *Van Wilder*, *The Rise of Taj*, sees Wilder's protégé Taj bring the high level shenanigans to the pomme stiffs of the prestigious Camden University. Of course, much hilarity ensues as Taj makes use of Wilder's tutelage in order to create a series of pranks that are a must see for fans of movies such as *American Pie* and *Harold & Kumar*.**

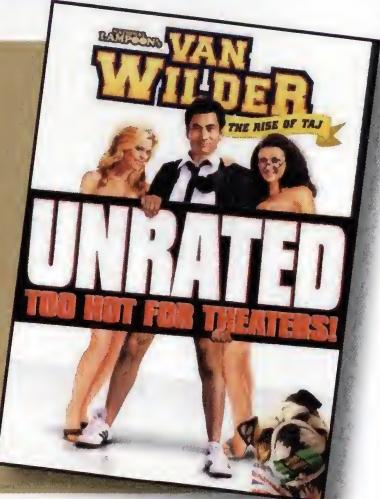
To celebrate the movie's DVD release on June the 20th, we have 10 copies of the movie to give away, all you have to

do is answer this simple question, and send it to us under the headline 'Van Wilder Giveaway', following the instructions on page 13.

### Question:

Which actor played the original Van Wilder?

- a. Marlon Brando
- b. Ryan Reynolds
- c. Chris Klein



## GIVEAWAY

## SUPER BIKE COMP

**Driving those crazy superbikes always looks terrifying, especially on the pro circuit. How the hell do those guys not fall off? Their knees actually touch the ground! We mean – what the hell! Personally, we get scared just watching them, but playing, in an awesome game like *SBK-07 Superbike World Championship*, that's a different matter. Bring it on is what we say.**

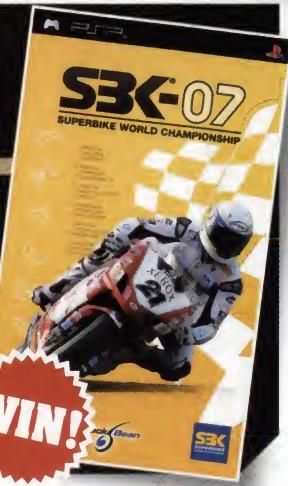
To celebrate the release of *SBK-07* we have five copies of the game, courtesy of Red Ant. All you have to do is answer this question, and send

it to us under the headline 'SBK Giveaway', following the rules on page 13.

### Question:

Who is number one in the SBK world rankings?

- a. Toseland
- b. Streisand
- c. Shumacher



**WIN!**

PS3 PS2 PSP

## '80S SHREDDING ON WAY TO PS2

Activision has announced a brand new *Guitar Hero* game coming exclusively to the PlayStation 2. *Guitar Hero: Rocks the '80s* is set to indulge in the classic fret-ripping extravaganza that was rock guitar in the 1980s and will feature 30 seminal tracks from that era's most nefarious shredders.

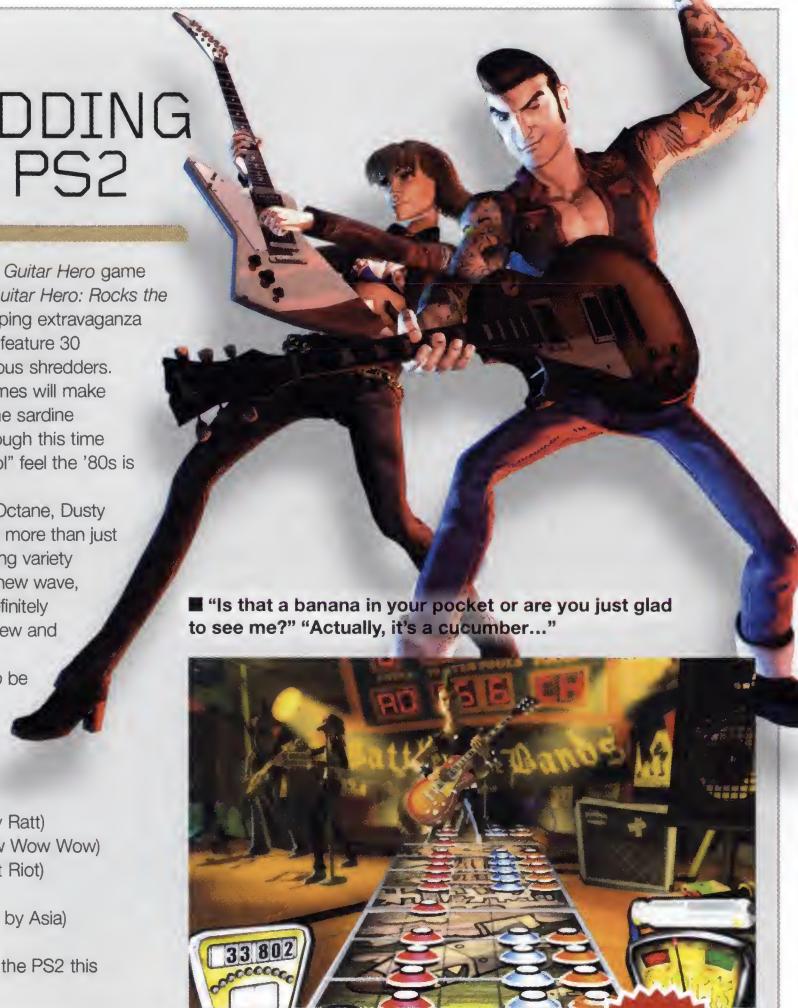
All the favourite features from past games will make a reprise, from the motley characters to the sardine-venues and insane multiplayer modes, though this time it'll pack that distinct "it's so trashy it's cool" feel the '80s is remembered for.

Additionally head of publishing at RedOctane, Dusty Welch, has stated the final track list will be more than just cheap kitsch. "The '80s features an amazing variety of rock genres from hair metal to punk to new wave, and our dedicated *Guitar Hero* fans will definitely appreciate the opportunity to play all the new and exciting content we've added," he said.

While the final list of 30 songs is yet to be made public, Activision has locked in the following eight classics:

- I Wanna Rock (by Twisted Sister)
- I Ran (by Flock of Seagulls)
- Round and Round (as made famous by Ratt)
- I Want Candy (as made famous by Bow Wow Wow)
- Metal Health (as made famous by Quiet Riot)
- Holy Diver (as made famous by Dio)
- Heat Of The Moment (as made famous by Asia)

Expect *Guitar Hero: Rocks the '80s* to hit the PS2 this summer. 



## BIRD'S EYE VIEW

If you turn to page 56 you'll find a feature called 'How to get you Girlfriend Gaming'.

It's written by guys, for guys, so (just in case our many female readers are already feeling their panties beginning to twist) the tongue is firmly in cheek on this one. You can get away with a lot when you're particularly light-hearted (and you're prepared to wear a bunched-up pair of pink undies on your head for the sake of comedy – sorry Mark).

Anyway, it does get you thinking. Just how difficult is it to get somebody into something they weren't previously interested in? It can't be too hard, or else Jehovah's Witnesses would've stopped hitting the streets years ago and nobody would be eating Oporto's.

But what does it take? I think the key is persistance. Destroy their will to refuse and you can get people to do anything. The moral? If you can't get a joypad into your partner's hand, keep trying until they relent, if only to stop your constant nagging.

Incidentally, the pink undies? They're not mine, so don't bother asking.

Jessica Greene, Games Writer

## NOKIA COMPETITION

Is your scabby phone getting you down? Do kids point and laugh any time you have to answer a call? Never fear, Nokia is giving away five of its new 5070 models as part

of a joint competition with GamePlayer, the hot new gaming website. All you have to do is click [gameplayer.com.au](http://gameplayer.com.au) and enter via the site online.

**gameplayer.com.au**



WIN!

### GIVEAWAY



## AFRAID OF THE DARK?

To celebrate the release of *The Darkness 2K* has decided to distribute some awesome prizes, which includes some exclusive signed art from the franchise, and five copies of the game itself.

All you have to do is answer this simple question, and send it to us under the headline 'The Darkness Giveaway', following the instructions featured on page 13.

#### Question:

In which major city is *The Darkness* set?

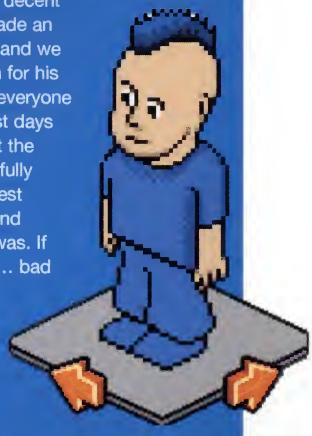
- New York
- Canberra
- London

WIN!



## HABBO WINNER

Congratulations to Adrian Burra, winner of the Habbo competition in Issue 3. It was tough to create a half decent 'Sonic', but Adrian made an absolute stellar effort and we decided to award him for his originality. Thanks to everyone else who entered. Just days ago the community at the Habbo Hotel successfully held the World's Biggest Online Beach Party, and what a great party it was. If you missed the party... bad luck, but you can still get a big kick from enjoying Juicy Fruit's new 60 piece MEGAPACK during game time.



# THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

Comic creator Marc Silvestri sheds some light on *The Darkness*



**OPS:** What are your thoughts on other comic book to videogame translations? Has anyone else done it right?

**MS:** There hasn't been a lot done

right which I think caused some skepticism from gamers when Starbreeze announced their next big game would be based on a comic. Starbreeze has set the bar with *The Darkness* though. And not just for comic-based games.

**OPS:** Where do you get your main inspiration from for your illustrations?

**MS:** A very scary place obviously! My creative inspirations are born from a desire to turn ideas on their head and do something a little different. That's where the horror/supernatural/sci-fi/superhero mash-ups come from. I don't have much interest in guys with tights and capes (although Batman is one of my favorite characters).

Artistically, my inspiration comes from a wide variety that's kind of all over the map. Painters like Frank Frazetta and J.C. Leyendecker, comic book guys like Mike Mignola, John Buscema, and Jim Lee, and filmmakers like Ridley Scott, James Cameron, and Stanley Kubrick. So yeah, I pull inspiration from a lot of directions.

**OPS:** What visual elements are you most excited about seeing translated into the game?

**MS:** Just the whole feel and tone of the game is amazing. Starbreeze nailed the world of Jackie and especially The Darkness itself. That and those little bastard Darklings! I nearly piss myself every time they're on screen.

**OPS:** How did you come up with the idea of *The Darkness* (powers)? What was your inspiration when you started to work on the comic?

**MS:** *The Darkness* is celebrating its ten year anniversary this year (which is nice timing with the game by the way) but the idea is really about 12 or 13 years old. I've always been fascinated with the idea of "be careful what you wish for" and being granted absolute power could and should bring a boatload of problems with it. The trick is to make those problems fun and interesting and not

too weighty or dull. Plus I've always had this love/hate relationship with the dark (literally and figuratively). I'm drawn to it but it sometimes scares the hell out of me.

I wanted a guy that was trapped in not only the physical world of the dark but the spiritual/internal world as well. I tossed the idea at David Wohl (which happened often) who was Top Cow's editor-in-chief at the time and he liked it. I was tired of drawing a team book (*Cyber Force*) and wanted a single character so Jackie was perfect. Plus by design, he would be part of a creepy world filled with horrible things I could draw, which brought me back to when I was digging on classic monster movies as a kid. All we needed was a writer with the right voice. That

guy turned out to be Garth Ennis. Garth is a great writer who has a knack for making anti-hero's likable. He made Jackie a really cool badass that you were both repelled and drawn to. Perfect.

**OPS:** Have your drawing skills evolved over the years? And if so, can you describe how exactly?

**MS:** I'd like to think that as time goes by I've gotten better but some fans may disagree! I always tell the other artists here at Top Cow that the main thing that's going to keep you going in this business is a desire to tell stories and get better doing it. When that desire goes away it's time to think about a career change. You

see it a lot where it's obvious someone is at the drawing board to just pay the bills. I'd rather move on to something else at that point because I'm not doing anyone any favors, including myself, by drawing without passion.

I think allowing myself to try new things artistically has helped. People familiar with my work can still tell it's me but I like to experiment once in a while. The main goal though is to keep interested and you do that by not getting comfortable.

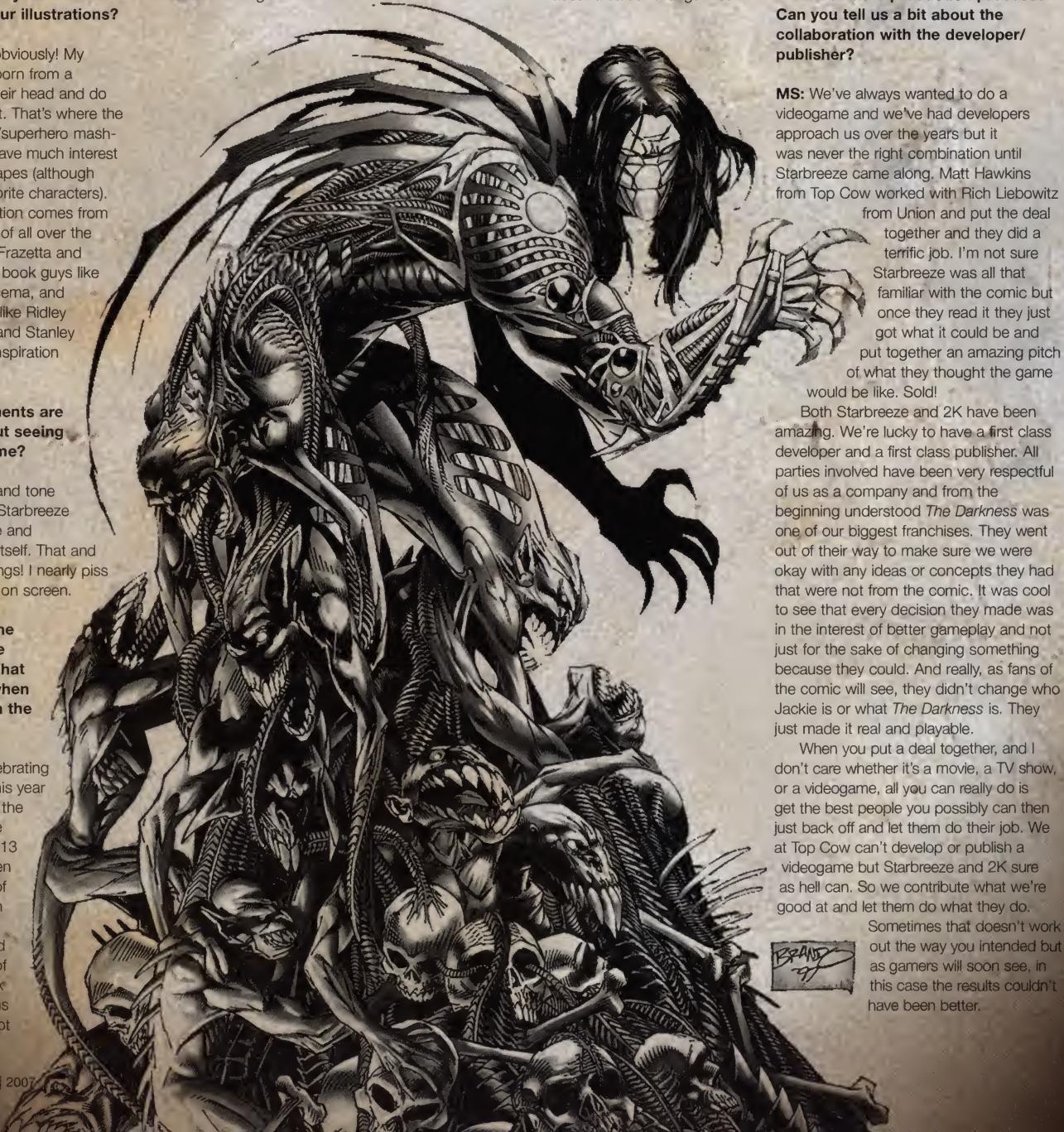
**OPS:** How did the idea of making a videogame about *The Darkness* come about? Was it your idea? Or Starbreeze's? Also how were you involved in the production process? Can you tell us a bit about the collaboration with the developer/publisher?

**MS:** We've always wanted to do a videogame and we've had developers approach us over the years but it was never the right combination until Starbreeze came along. Matt Hawkins from Top Cow worked with Rich Liebowitz from Union and put the deal together and they did a terrific job. I'm not sure Starbreeze was all that familiar with the comic but once they read it they just got what it could be and put together an amazing pitch of what they thought the game would be like. Sold!

Both Starbreeze and 2K have been amazing. We're lucky to have a first class developer and a first class publisher. All parties involved have been very respectful of us as a company and from the beginning understood *The Darkness* was one of our biggest franchises. They went out of their way to make sure we were okay with any ideas or concepts they had that were not from the comic. It was cool to see that every decision they made was in the interest of better gameplay and not just for the sake of changing something because they could. And really, as fans of the comic will see, they didn't change who Jackie is or what *The Darkness* is. They just made it real and playable.

When you put a deal together, and I don't care whether it's a movie, a TV show, or a videogame, all you can really do is get the best people you possibly can then just back off and let them do their job. We at Top Cow can't develop or publish a videogame but Starbreeze and 2K sure as hell can. So we contribute what we're good at and let them do what they do.

Sometimes that doesn't work out the way you intended but as gamers will soon see, in this case the results couldn't have been better.



BRANDY



ARMORED CORE 4  
IS COMING... GET  
READY FOR BATTLE  
AT: [Harvey Norman](#)



Mild violence



PLAYSTATION 3

FROM SOFTWARE

505  
GAMES

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# GAME DESIGN 101

## On the Level

**I**t's impossible to say there's a single feature that is the key to a good game. We can nominate the likely suspects – game engine, graphics/graphical style, story/scenario, level design – but they've all got to come together to make a game worth playing.

Level design, however, would be pretty close to the top of the list. A racing game with only one track, a shooter with only one level... not so good. And when you think about your great game memories, they're inevitably tied up with game levels. The time you finally nailed that corner in *GT4*, or your smooth-as-silk run through a *SOCOM* level – the environments we play in are an integral part of the experience.

So what makes a good level? Interactivity can help but it's the ability to make you feel that you're actually within the imaginary space it creates. Detail helps, as does good art and sound, but fundamentally it comes down to architecture. Does this feel like a real place? Or is it full of arbitrary-seeming items and structures? Are there numerous different approaches you can take? Is it full of challenges (tricky corners or jumps, secret areas, etc.)? Are any special items (weapons, power-ups and the like) located so as to maximise the risk/reward they represent?

Linearity can also be a contributor. There's nothing inherently wrong with being funnelled down a path, as long as you can still make meaningful choices about how to approach the game's challenges. Enemy AI also plays a part here; a racing track should have only one racing line, so AI drivers need to contribute with some realistic lines of their own. In action games, it helps if the AI opponents can also use the level intelligently, by taking cover, grabbing items and so on.

A black art? Most likely. After all, if it was easy, everybody would be doing it, right?



## CALLING ALL CARS... ER, ROBOTS

**Transformers: big ass robots** that can turn into cars. What's cooler than that? The only thing that we can think of is Mr T locked in an arm wrestling duel to the death with Dolph Lundgren, but even then it's pretty close. In order to celebrate the release of the MASSIVE 17-disc *Transformers* box set, in addition to the re-release of the animated movie, Madman is giving away some pretty awesome stuff. In addition to the aforementioned movie and box set combo, are throwing in some cool *Transformers* gear such as hoodies, T-shirts and the like. All ya gotsta do is answer this little question and send it to us under the headline 'Transformers Giveaway', following the instructions on page 13.

### Question:

In the original cartoons what kind of car did 'Bumblebee' turn into?

- a. A Ferrari
- b. A Mini Cooper
- c. A Volkswagen Beetle



■ "Ladies? FYI – I saw Galvatron in the locker room and it was this big"

PS3 PS2 PSP

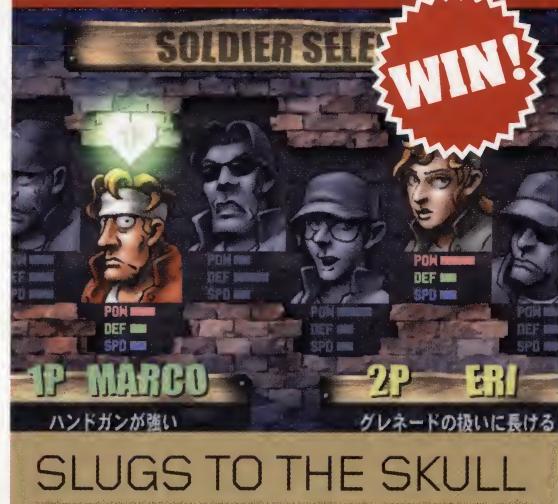
## SAINTS ROW 2 MARCHING ONTO PS3



**A strategic move** by THQ has seen its open-world crime extravaganza, *Saints Row*, cancelled for release on the PlayStation 3 only three months after it was touted hit shelves. However THQ was quick to reveal the cancellation was in lieu of an all-new *Saints Row* sequel by developer Volition headed for the PlayStation 3 next year.

*Saints Row*, an action game in the mould of action staple *GTA*, has been a massive hit in the absence of a next-gen version of Rockstar's juggernaut. The *Saints Row* sequel is set to utilise the power of the PlayStation 3 to run on Volition's proprietary engine and will look to push the boundaries of the genre in the wake of *GTAIV*'s late 2007 release. THQ hinted the sequel would feature vibrant visuals, a load of customization options, and the return of the multiplayer modes seen in the original.

### GIVEAWAY



1P MARCO  
2P ERI

ハンドガンが強い

グレネードの扱いに長ける

## SLUGS TO THE SKULL

**Having the opportunity** to play one version of the iconic arcade shooter, *Metal Slug*, is pretty cool experience; now imagine having all seven versions on one single disc! Still here? Has your brain haemorrhaged yet from sheer awesomeness? Are your underpants still dry? Well, they shouldn't be, because this package looks set to be a must buy for PSP owners everywhere. To celebrate the release of the *Metal Slug Anthology* we have five copies of the game to give away. Receiving this awesome prize is as easy as answering this simple question, sending it to us under the headline 'Metal Slug Giveaway' and following the instructions on page 13.

### Question:

In which year was the original *Metal Slug* released?

- a. 1996
- b. 1997
- c. 1987

TAKE TO THE STREETS OF 1976 NEW YORK, IN THIS ACTION PACKED, HOLLYWOOD STYLE DRIVING GAME.

# BECOME THE GODFATHER OF STREET RACING



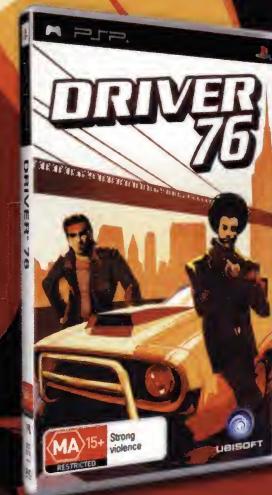
★ Play a host of mini-games and create carnage in the destruction derby!



★ Compete in multi-player street races with a friend.  
★ Download and swap items with friends via the wireless feature.

★ Experience the thrills of racing over 40 fully customisable vehicles, across 27 all new missions.

# DRIVER 76



# OUT NOW

<http://driver.ubi.com>



Strong violence

Exclusive to  
PSP

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UBISOFT

# LETTERS

HAVE YOUR SAY & WIN THE DARKNESS



■ Years into the future, bandanas were still cool...

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### EXCLUSIVE?

**Dear OPS,**

Obviously the PS3 is the most powerful machine on the market but what difference does it make when so many games these days go multi-platform? Game programmers don't see an extra dollar if they spend more time delving into the extra power available from the PS3 to produce a game that has extra gameplay or enhanced graphics over other consoles. I'm sure that exclusive titles like your GTs and your Metal Gears will no doubt push the envelope of its graphical prowess, but these exclusives are few and far between and as we have seen of late a lot of games that were once "exclusive" are now multi-platform. I understand that this is obviously the best business decision for game companies to make but where does it leave us, the fans of Sony who forked out a lot extra for a machine that should leave the competition for dust?

**Kris Black, Auckland**

*Well, the move towards multi-platform gaming has been a long time coming, mainly due to the rising costs of game production. As console technology becomes more sophisticated the time and money required to develop videogames has increased, meaning that companies are often forced to go multiplatform to recoup their increasing expenses. But don't worry, there are plenty of exclusives on the way in the shape of Lair, Metal Gear Solid 4, Heavenly Sword, Final Fantasy XIII, Gran Turismo 5, Ratchet & Clank Future, Uncharted and now the awesome Haze. So you won't have to look very far for games that showcase the power of the PS3.*



### WINNER!



Letter of the month wins a copy of the brilliant *The Darkness* thanks to 2K!



■ Amaterasu: loves to bury the bone...



### WON'T SOMEONE THINK OF THE CHILDREN!

I'm worried that during the next gen of gaming we will see the end of G rated game titles. Developers now have at their disposal a piece of hardware with endless possibilities and they want to exploit that with ultra realism. With the advancements in graphics, games are inevitably going to get more graphic and obscene. Now don't get me wrong, I like blowing virtual heads off as much as the next guy but I'd hate to think of a world where games require violence to be fun. I understand that early adopters of the PS3 are most likely in their early twenties, so I don't blame them for trying to cater for the majority – but one awesome G rated game can go a long way. So I'm asking you, do you think this is where the industry is headed or could things turn around?

**Paul Menezes, via email**

*Like you, Paul, we're not adverse to a bit of zombie blasting, limb ripping, eyeball exploding, sweet, sweet gore, but too much of one thing is never good. According to the Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia, upwards of 70% of games are classified G or PG (previously G8+). Sports games, racing games, puzzle games, platformers – they're not going anywhere. There are a couple of big-time G-rated games on the horizon too. A new Katamari game has just been announced, and if you have a quick flick across to page 26 you'll find our preview of LittleBigPlanet.*

### OVER CLOVER?

I am writing to you because I'm angry that unique games don't get as good sales as other games that have been done a million times. I have no problem that great games such as God of War, GTA and Guitar Hero get good commercial sales but I want the games that may look or play differently like Okami, Psychonauts, Viewtiful Joe to get just as good sales. If these games don't get good sales the developers might close down just like Clover Studios did and then great games wouldn't be able to be made in the future. All I'm saying is that in future you might want to buy an original game instead of buying another WWII game or crappy game based on a movie.

**Alex Herrington, via email**

*We know exactly where you're coming from Alex, and we couldn't agree more. Despite the fact that we love our sequels, the lack of original game concepts often frustrates us. It irks us, for example that the awesome Ico sank without a trace while half-arsed movie tie ins continue to sell bucketloads. In the end it's really down to you, the consumer, to stop buying drivel, and only buy the best. So please, for the love, buy those original, quirky games we all want to see more of!*

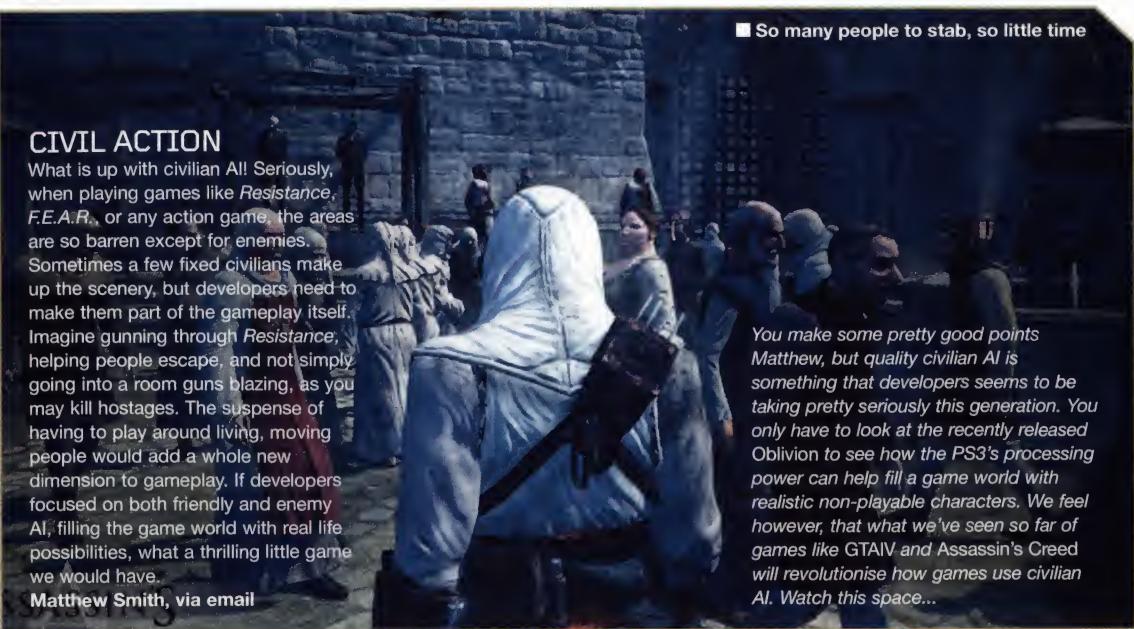
### THE MEANING OF LIFE

Hey guys just writing in too say how much I love my PS3, as a matter of fact. I'm writing to OPS right now from my gaming chair (nicknamed the throne). Which brings me too my next point, with the sheer awesomeness of the PS3's power I have found that I never have to leave my room for my entertainment needs. My PS3 does everything – movies, music, the net and not too mention the best games we have ever seen, I truly believe owning a PS3 is the meaning of life! P.S. You probably get asked this everyday but how can I get a job with OPS even if it means going through some sort of satanic frat boy ritual, I will take it all.

**Cheyne Bright, via email**

*The meaning of life, eh? Well we don't know if we'd go that far, but if there was ever a reason to crack out the 'comfy pants', and glue our arses to the couch for an entire week*





## CIVIL ACTION

What is up with civilian AI? Seriously, when playing games like *Resistance*, *F.E.A.R.*, or any action game, the areas are so barren except for enemies. Sometimes a few fixed civilians make up the scenery, but developers need to make them part of the gameplay itself. Imagine gunning through *Resistance*, helping people escape, and not simply going into a room guns blazing, as you may kill hostages. The suspense of having to play around living, moving people would add a whole new dimension to gameplay. If developers focused on both friendly and enemy AI, filling the game world with real life possibilities, what a thrilling little game we would have.

Matthew Smith, via email

it would be the PS3. If it could make a decent turkey sandwich you could quite possibly make a case for never having to move in your life again, EVER. Oh, crap, we forgot about relieving ourselves... oh well, there's always Pampers...

## UNDERAGE?

As a red-blooded, GTA-loving, PS3-owning 12 year-old, I am eagerly anticipating the awe-inspiring greatness that will be unleashed on the unsuspecting population on October 19. As I am already watching the game closely, it's only a matter of days before I begin saving up for what will no doubt be an absolute better of a game. But the reason I wrote to the team at OPS wasn't to tell you what you probably already know but to ask you to do a full feature preview on the holy grail of PS3 games: *GTAIV*. This is a heartfelt plea from one underage videogame-lover to an old, overweight, unwashed, possibly drunk, fellow game lover. *GTAIV* FOR PRESIDENT!!!

P.S. Do the god-damn preview.  
Michael Ridgewell, via email

## INSIDE GAMING

# MARK HAS A PIRATEY OLD TIME WITH CAPTAIN JACK SPARROW...

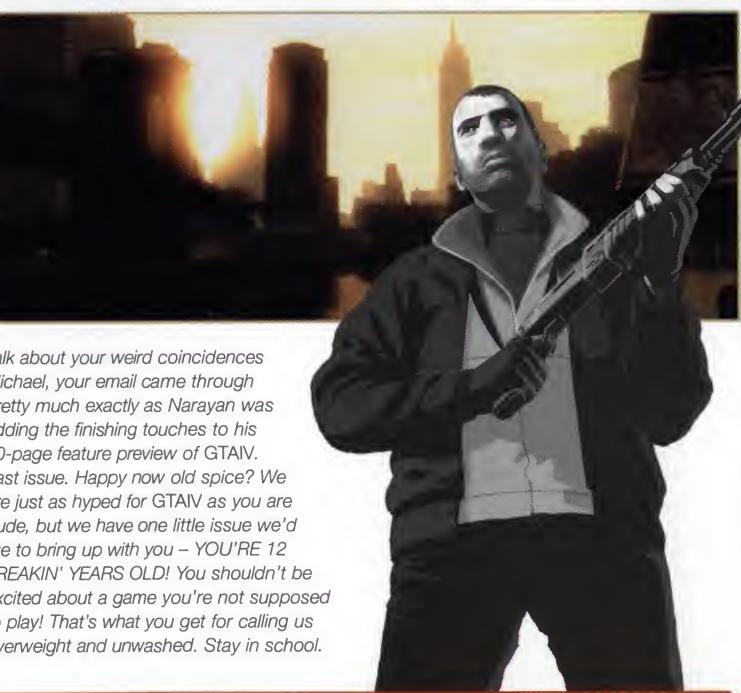
**Mark:** What up homes? Introduce yourself for the folks reading at home

**Jack:** Yarr... I be Captain Jack Sparrow, all up in yer grill kickin' it pirate style. Ya heard?

**Mark:** Wow, you just went from pirate to token black guy in the space of one line.

**Jack:** Yarr... I be flexible in the language department. I speak jive. Savvy?

**Mark:** Whoa. Not only do I 'savvy', but I'm also extremely impressed. My attempts at speaking jive always seem to end in embarrassment, or with me being punched in the face. Maybe I'd be better off learning pirate speak... could you teach me Mr Captain Jack Sparrow?



Talk about your weird coincidences Michael, your email came through pretty much exactly as Narayan was adding the finishing touches to his 10-page feature preview of *GTAIV*. Last issue. Happy now old spice? We are just as hyped for *GTAIV* as you are dude, but we have one little issue we'd like to bring up with you - YOU'RE 12 FREAKIN' YEARS OLD! You shouldn't be excited about a game you're not supposed to play! That's what you get for calling us overweight and unwashed. Stay in school.

You make some pretty good points Matthew, but quality civilian AI is something that developers seems to be taking pretty seriously this generation. You only have to look at the recently released *Oblivion* to see how the PS3's processing power can help fill a game world with realistic non-playable characters. We feel however, that what we've seen so far of games like *GTAIV* and *Assassin's Creed* will revolutionise how games use civilian AI. Watch this space...

## CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

## JUICY

I was just wondering whether you could tell me if *Juiced 2* would be coming out on PS2 or if it will only be for PS3.

Chris Hassen, via email.

We're pleased to let you know that *Juiced 2* will be roaring its way onto the PS2 at the exact same time as it hits the PS3. Mmm... juicy...

## ZIIIIIP...

THAT STUPID "UNZIPPING SOUND" GAG WASN'T FUNNY THE 1ST TIME U USED IT SO WOT MAKES U THINK IT IS FUNNY THE 70TH TIME U USE IT. IT'S LIKE A BUNCH OF KIDS WHO HAVE JUST DISCOVERED SEXUAL INNUENDO

Anonymous via email

Okay 'Anonymous', if that is your real name, ease off the caps lock button. It reads like your shouting at us, and to be honest, we are a little upset. Now look at what you've done: Mark just ran into the toilet in a teary mess... how are we going to sort that out?

## LAID BACK

I just picked up a new PS3. Just wondering is there a difference in the performance of a PS3 whether it stands up or lies down. Their probably isn't but just thought I'd ask.

William Mumford

You're right, you little scamp you! The PS3 is just as pant achingly powerful regardless of whether it's standing up or on its side. It makes absolutely no difference. Personally, though, we like that sexy little thing to be on its back at all times... woof!

## SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games - on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback  
Derwent Howard  
PO Box 1037  
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355  
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: RACING  
■ PLAYERS: 1-2  
■ RELEASE: LATE 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: EA  
■ DEVELOPER: CRITERION  
■ WEB: [www.ea.com/burnout/paradise](http://www.ea.com/burnout/paradise)



■ "Alright baby, time to park!" "But we're in the middle of the street?" "The Chad doesn't mind spectators. Let's make out"

# BURNOUT PARADISE

Just another day in...

**I**t's late afternoon. You're expertly weaving your way through traffic on a picturesque coastal highway at 208kmp/h. Everything blurs around you. The finish line is just up ahead. You're in first place. You take two hundredths of a second to glance to the right when the sun glistening off the water distracts you, and that's all she wrote...

The bus came out of nowhere. Before you have a millisecond to react, your car is now a contorted, writhing mass of twisted metal, airborne, spinning wildly out of control. It lurches forward. You're launched out of your seat. You land miraculously on your feet, controller in hand, a plethora of swear words all jostling for position at the tip of your tongue, wondering which will see the light of day first. Excitement, exhilaration, disappointment and frustration all overwhelm you in equal amounts... yet before you realise, your thumb has hit retry and you're eagerly awaiting the restart of the race.

This is but the merest glimpse of *Burnout Paradise*, the latest adrenaline

charged offering from Criterion and EA. If you're one of the handful of people who haven't had a lash at a *Burnout* yet, you don't know what you're missing. With arcade style gameplay, the addictive quality of Krispy Kreme doughnuts, and more bone crunching crashes than a *Blues Brothers* movie, the *Burnout* series revolutionised the racing genre by breaking away from the *Gran Turismos* and brought back Jerry Bruckheimer-styled, over the top racing and destruction, and boy do we thank them for it... daily.

## START YOUR ENGINES!

Now, how does *Burnout Paradise* differ from its predecessors? We're glad you asked. Remember all those pesky menu screens that got in the way of just hitting the road and laying waste to all around you? They're gone. Kaput! Finito! Paradise City is just what you'd hope it'd be, a living breathing city where the potential for action, adventure and excitement isn't just around the corner, it's lurking

around EVERY corner! You're encouraged to explore the city and uncover special events, crash junctions, grab massive air over some insane jumps, complete races, and who knows where a signature takedown could be hiding.



■ "So Jack, why did you get a scorpion painted on your roof?"  
"Cause I like to party!"

## TAKE ME DOWN TO PARADISE CITY

While the media we've seen for *Burnout Paradise* looks phenomenal, we grudgingly admit that the name was a little on the flat side. After such testosterone laden prequels, with monikers like "Takedown", "Revenge" and "Dominator" we were expecting something with a little more punch, like *Burnout Carnage*, or *Burnout Devastation* or *Burnout Annihilation*... you get the drift. The only way we could toughen it up was to deliver a little hard rock to *Paradise*, hence the pic of Axl Rose from the Gunners segued via their classic track "Paradise City". Luke, buddy, this one's for you!



"Paradise City is just what you'd hope it'd be, a living breathing city where the potential for action, adventure and excitement [is] lurking around every corner."



■ Get used to this view if you ever race us – we're awesome. Well, no, not really, but please don't tell our girlfriends. Okay?

just waiting to give its loving caress to the unfortunates? We're talking about an open world here people, with endless possibilities. What more could you ask for? Criterion is already a couple steps ahead. In fact, they have got answers for questions we haven't even thought up yet! How about giving you a licence to keep a record of the damage and devastation

you wreak upon Paradise City? Sound good? Perhaps the city could be run by the most hardcore, insane, petrol sniffing, rev-heads your imagination could possibly err... imagine. As your licence to thrill and expert driving skills increase, so does your notoriety, leading you to cross paths with other legendary drivers. These guys don't want to beat you, or take your wheels, they want you out of the picture. It's not if you ain't first, you're last – it's if you ain't first, you're dead! That certainly ups the ante, don't it?

Criterion is also promising a brand spanking new engine that will treat drivers to a level of speed not seen before. All you crash enthusiasts, fret not, as the same goes for the crashes. We're talking about some of the most explosive, earth shattering stacks you've ever laid eyes on, where cars will literally be ripped in two and shattered into a billion itty bitty pieces. Niiiiiice!

### OMG... THAT'S HOT!

While available media on this little puppy has been scarce, a few new screens and a first look trailer hit the web a little while ago. Do yourselves a favour and check it out. You'll be treated to a half a dozen or so really, really, really, really ridiculously good looking mean machines tearing it up on a gloriously sunny day. The city looks absolutely amazing, with the lighting, shadows and draw distance seriously nailing the "WOW!" factor on the head. Ducking in and out of traffic, all your favourite roadsters are there. There's

the flaming hot rod (you know, the one that's a bitch to control), a couple of kick-ass muscle cars, and of course the penal extending sports cars. The only complaint we had was the distinct lack of freaking crashes? We're reasonable people, we're not asking for the earth. Maybe a crash junction or two, perhaps an explosion with little pieces of wreckage littering the street for a couple of kilometres or so. Is that so much to ask for?

*Burnout Paradise* really is a case where simple words will not, and cannot suffice. We've seen it, researched it, read about it and now, goddammit, we want to play this sucker!  **Dave Kozicki**

### INFO BYTE

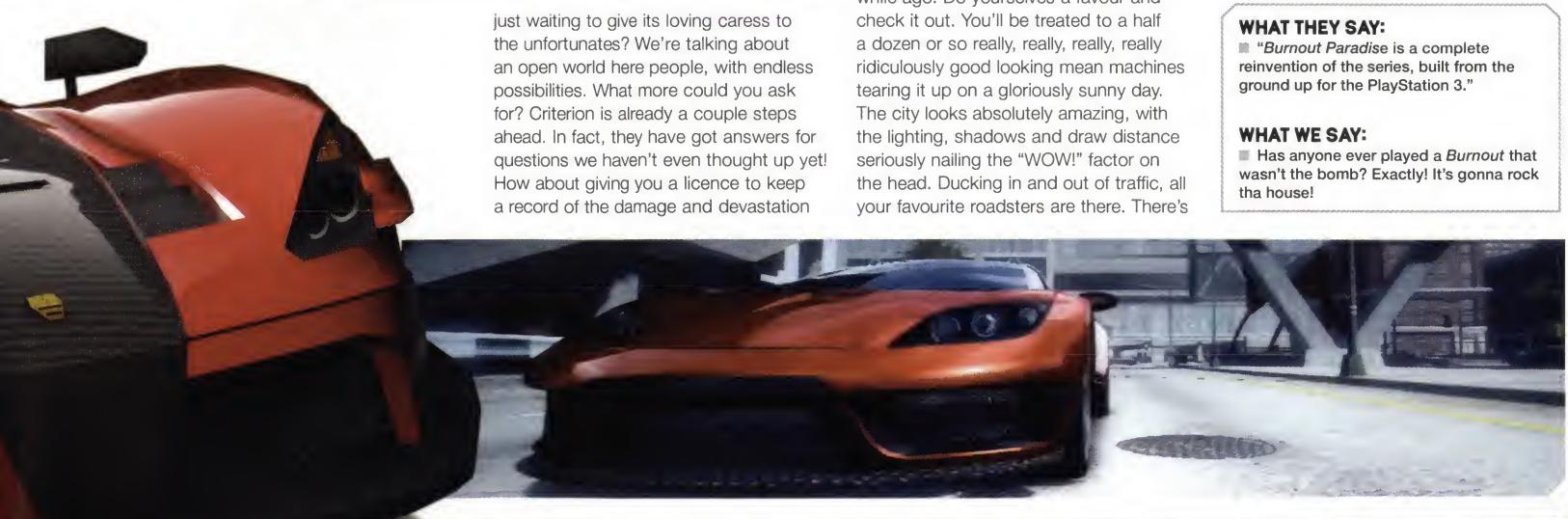
The executive producer, Pete Hawley, promises "innovative online capabilities to smash racing conventions". He didn't elaborate, but with *Burnout*'s track record, you know it's going to be the goods.

### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Burnout Paradise is a complete reinvention of the series, built from the ground up for the PlayStation 3."

### WHAT WE SAY:

■ Has anyone ever played a *Burnout* that wasn't the bomb? Exactly! It's gonna rock the house!



# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ADVENTURE  
■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT  
■ DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL  
■ WEB: [www.ubi.com](http://www.ubi.com)



# ASSASSIN'S CREED

The need for creed...

**D**espite the fact that *Assassin's Creed* is roughly five or six months from release, and what we've seen since E3 last year amounts to diddley squat, it's extremely difficult to imagine the game being anything other than completely and utterly mindblowing.

Let's have a quick gander at the facts.

Developed by Ubisoft Montreal, *Assassin's* has the cream of the developer crop striving to create the game that will truly define next gen action. After rewriting the rules with the *Prince of Persia* series the team is determined to do it again, making all other attempts at action look like lame, smelly dog turds in comparison.

Set during the crusades in the 12th century this game is as well researched as they come. Following the story of Altair, a high profile member of the Assassin's Brotherhood (loosely based on a secret group that actually existed), you must track down and kill a number of high profile targets in order to

re-establish your reputation as a master assassin. Utilising over a THOUSAND contextual movements Altair can navigate the enormous cityscape like a sugared-up kid in a playground, leaping from building to building via the kind of acrobatic trickery normally reserved for a Tony Jaa movie.

But you knew most of this already.

Now for the new stuff. We had the chance to get an exclusive look at some new footage of *Assassin's Creed*, and although little of what we saw deviated from older footage, we did manage to spot some new indications of where this classic in the making is headed.

Of the many things we saw here are a few of the highlights: Altair jumping effortlessly between three ridiculously slender balance points with the style of a graceful, yet manly, ballet dancer; an awesome reverse stab into the guts of some unfortunate goon;

and a dramatic swan dive, that producer Jade Raymond has provisionally titled the 'leap of faith'. This was possibly the highlight of the extended demo we were shown, as Altair made a huge blind jump from an enormous building onto a conveniently positioned pile of hay below. A spectacular ending to the demo I'm sure you'll agree, and we're already salivating at the adrenalin rush such an awesome leap will provide.

We have complete confidence that the potentially genre altering experience that *Assassin's Creed* promises is in the safest of hands at Ubisoft Montreal. If the producers deliver what we are expecting then we could be looking at a game that reaches the kind of dizzy heights that developers will be attempting to traverse for years subsequently. *Assassin's Creed*, even at this early stage, is looking like a genuine game of the year candidate, and considering the competition, that speaks eons regarding the hype for this title. Bring it on. **Mark Serrels**



## WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Assassin's Creed is going to push the videogame experience as we know it today into an entirely new direction."

## WHAT WE SAY:

■ If this game is bad we will shave off our body hair and feed it to each other. That's a promise.

## HIDE AND SEEK

A huge aspect of *Assassin's Creed* focuses on a new gameplay mechanic called 'social stealth'. Sadly not an awesome technique for avoiding fat chicks in clubs, social stealth is actually a new way to hide from enemies in the course of the game. As opposed to disguising yourself in conventional ways, social stealth allows you to hide convincingly in crowd situations, blending in to avoid confrontation, before knifing some poor bugger in the back.



■ Kebabs in the 12th century: brutal yet effective



■ The stock market crash of 1191AD was a difficult time for everyone...



## INFO BYTE

Altair's name, meaning 'son of none' refers to the fact that he is an orphan raised by the Assassin Brotherhood.



THE HISTORY CHANNEL.

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# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: PLATFORMER  
■ PLAYERS: 1-4  
■ RELEASE: 2008  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY  
■ DEVELOPER: MEDIA MOLECULE  
■ WEB: [www.mediamolecule.com](http://www.mediamolecule.com)



■ That little brown guy on the right is NAKED! We thought this game was supposed to be child friendly?!

## LITTLEBIGPLANET

Making the 'little' big...

**D**o us a little favour would you? Quickly, before you check out the remainder of this preview, have a butchers at that box near the top of this page – yep, that's right, the one showing all the info like 'release', 'developer', etc. See that part that says 'genre'.

Balderdash. Ignore it.

For the intents and purpose of this preview that section is completely and utterly useless. Before writing this preview we were totally at a loss for words – what the hell should we put there, what 'genre' does *LittleBigPlanet* fall under? Eventually we settled for 'platformer', but only out of sheer necessity, because there's essentially no word in the

gaming vocabulary that can describe *LittleBigPlanet*, without making the ground breaking concepts behind the game seem totally redundant and commonplace. It's almost as if we need a new language just to do it justice, lest we become tongue tied trying to describe exactly how *LittleBigPlanet* is going to redefine that little thing we call 'genre'.

### GLOBE TROTTING

After watching some in-game footage of the game, it's easy to define *LittleBigPlanet* as a simple 'platformer'. Despite playing in an isometric-ey space, it harks back to the simple 2D run and jump games of the 16-bit era that sputtered and died as gaming

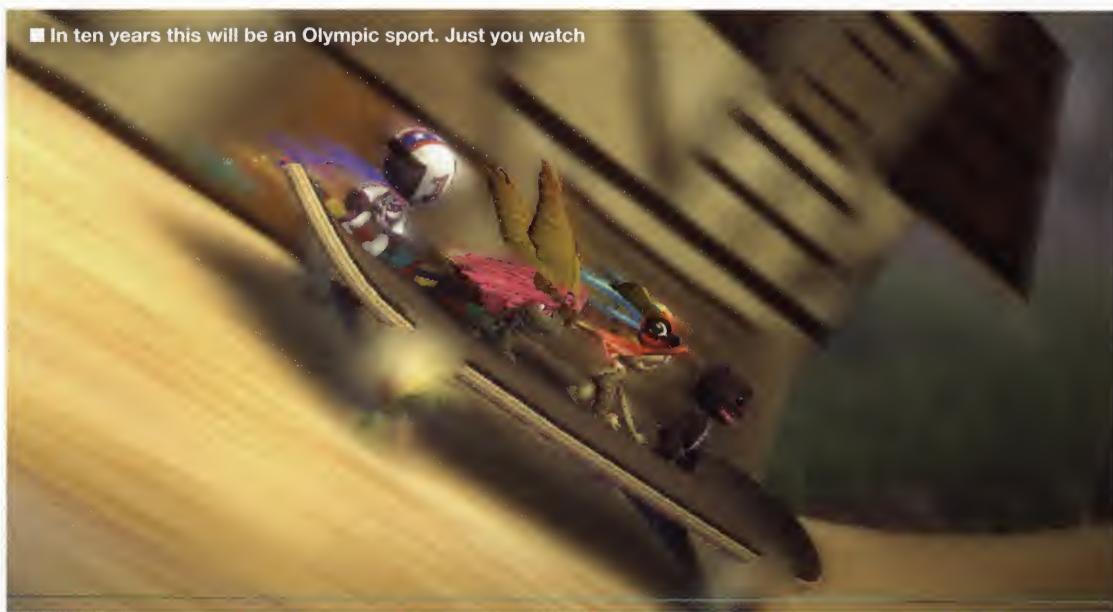
made its grandiose jump into 3D. Take a closer look however and the differences are clear: not only is *LittleBigPlanet* the perfect chance to play and have fun in a charming game-space, it's an opportunity to create that environment yourself. Yep, that's right, one of the major innovations of *LittleBigPlanet*, is the ability to build and create your own levels from scratch.

The level we saw was built and created by Media Molecule, the developers of behind the game, but we had the chance to see how the user created content worked, and the broad wealth of options available, combined with its hyper user friendly interface, convinced us that creating the levels in the game might turn



■ "I'm a ROCKET MAN!"

■ In ten years this will be an Olympic sport. Just you watch



## THE GRAND DESIGN

A demo version of *LittleBigPlanet* is due on the PlayStation Network later this year, allowing gamers to start building their own levels straight away. Apparently one of Sony's major plans is to integrate the best user-created maps from the budding community into the official release. So if you fancy yourself as a designer you could quite possibly have one of your creations packaged in the retail version of *LittleBigPlanet*. How awesome is that?

“Although it might seem like a bit of an oxymoron *LittleBigPlanet*’s art design is deceptively mindblowing.”



■ It's just like the Swiss Family Robinson! Except with rockets!

out to be as much fun as actually playing through them...

### A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

‘Potential’ is a word tailor made for a game like *LittleBigPlanet*. It’s useless to talk about the boundaries that shape how gamers interact with the game, because essentially, there are none. Using your character, you actually play through the level design process creating

as you go. You can import pretty much anything you like into a *LittleBigPlanet* level, and use it to shape your gaming experience. That includes things like photographs from your own collection, or content from the web. Anything is feasible in this environment.

And despite its well worn, cartoon charm, the whole thing is grounded in a

### INFO BYTE

Even Nintendo big shot Reggie Fils-Aime loved *LittleBigPlanet*. He was last seen crying into a Martini glass, muttering something like ‘but we’ve still got Mario...’

perfectly realistic set of physics that reward the player in so many ways. If you attach a circular cog to something, for example, it will turn realistically; you can push this cog, swing on it, basically do whatever the hell you want and all of your interactions will be consistent and fun, mainly because it feels so natural and above all, accurate.

But when you take these basic principles of realism and fun, and expand them into an entire level, or world, full of possibilities then all bets are off. Sony intends to make *LittleBigPlanet* part of a huge gaming community that allows gamers to create and share their own personal playgrounds online. Each time you log on to the PlayStation network it will be possible to choose from thousands upon thousands of user-created *LittleBigPlanet* areas that you can explore at your own pace. This essentially means that even if you never go through the process of creating your own environment, you’ll never run out of worlds to see, or

levels to play through. *LittleBigPlanet* truly is the gift that keeps on giving.

### ART ATTACK

And although it might seem like a bit of an oxymoron, *LittleBigPlanet*’s art design is deceptively mindblowing. It creeps towards you stealthily, with its childish characters and cardboard cut out charm, but before long you’ll come to the realisation that the belated promise of *Toy Story* graphics that gamers have been hankering after for years have finally been arrived at. The sharp, picture perfect detail of what initially seems like the most basic, commonplace model will eventually melt the eyes out of your socket upon closer inspection.

It’s a theme that runs constantly through every thread of *LittleBigPlanet* – and something reflected perfectly in its cleverly juxtaposed title: that which initially seems ‘little’, and relatively simple, eventually becomes ‘big’ if you pay it enough attention. That is the beauty of the game: it’s as in-depth, or as shallow as you want it to be. *LittleBigPlanet*’s basic game mechanics are as old as the gaming medium itself, but the ingenious physics system makes even the simplest of actions interesting and fun.

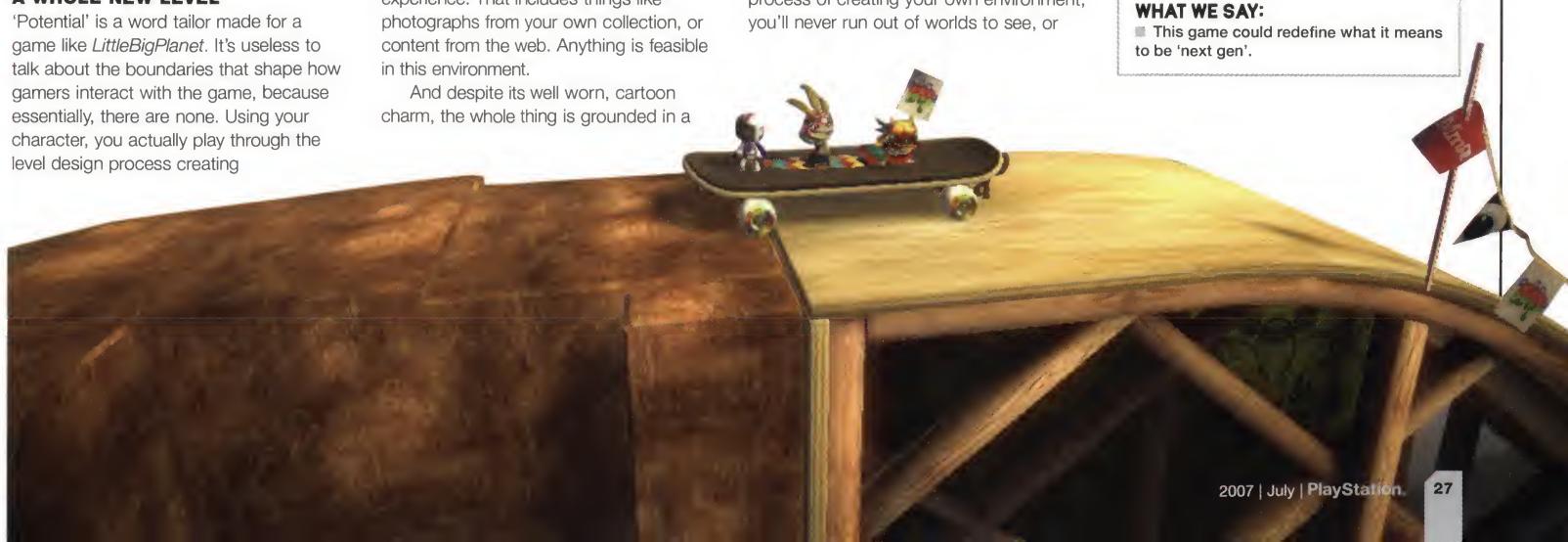
It may be the game that changes our definition of what ‘next gen’ is. We are used to the idea that ‘bigger’ is better: bigger environments, more characters, more complex controls, but *LittleBigPlanet* takes joy in the smaller things. It’s the equivalent of shrinking yourself down into the largest toy box ever conceived – we can’t wait to get stuck in. □ **Mark Serrels**

### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ “We’ve created the space for PS3 owners to realise their creativity and craft their own unique gameplay experience.”

### WHAT WE SAY:

■ This game could redefine what it means to be ‘next gen’.



# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ PLAYERS: 1 (MULTI TBC)  
■ RELEASE: OCTOBER 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY  
■ DEVELOPER: INSOMNIAC  
■ WEB: insomniaegames.com



■ After it started raining, Skeletor began to regret his mechanical arms upgrade.

# RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

Set to make the Road Runner's ACME arsenal look like a cap gun...

Insomniac could have used this title for a Ratchet and Clank heavy metal CD. Fortunately, unlike bastions of integrity like Paris Hilton who whore themselves out to every bit of marketable schlock possible, Insomniac's sticking to what it does best: making top games.

The news is that Ratchet the lombax and his sidekick robot are headed to the PlayStation 3 with their trademark toon chaos set to bang bigger and louder thanks to the system's superior muscle. While there hasn't been a great deal of information released on the game's story, we do know it's going to have something to do with a mysterious enemy from Ratchet's past who's out to cause a bunch of trouble for the fury little champion.

Of crucial note, *R&C:ToD* is set for a

slight shift in gameplay focus. While the last few *R&C* games have focused on firing off all manner of gadget-based weaponry, particularly in *Ratchet: Deadlocked*, *R&C:ToD* will be moving back towards traditional platforming elements with Clank once again a playable character. Expect lots of jumping, climbing, and other platform staples to feature.

*R&C:ToD* was recently shown off when Insomniac released the official trailer of the game on the PlayStation 3 Store. We've watched the goods several times now and as a result have started doing a few odd things, like giggling and dribbling while asleep. The demo in particular featured a future metropolis amidst lush green surrounds, covered with sky highways and floating air taxis scooting

through the sky. One scene even showed Ratchet and Clank being attacked by a massive turret-like robot that was firing missiles from outside into an enclosed area that Ratchet was bolting through. Enemy robots also looked sensational, portraying the kiddie sense of menace the series thrives on while packing plenty of detail and some top animations.

Rumours also run about that Insomniac will include some SIXAXIS functionality into some of the weapons, enabling players to zap stuff while wriggling the control pad about.

*Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction* is set for a September release, which will no doubt cause us to continue wishing our lives away. Urgh, the humanity!

■ James Ellis



■ "Clank, if you weren't a robot, do you think we could ever, you know... be more than just... friends?" (awkward silence)

## WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "We're getting back to the studio's strength of showing as much as we possibly can in a title."

## WHAT WE SAY:

■ With such a fine pedigree, expect this to be the alpha platformer on release, knocking all other contenders up, or out.

## INSOMNIAC GO PHILANTHROPIC

James, a new playable character in the game, is directly based off 9-year-old James Westbrook who was unfortunately paralysed after a car accident. Being a fan of game design, Insomniac found out about his situation and opted to include him as a playable character. Just how much he'll feature in the game is unknown, but we're happy that such an astute developer is thinking of more than just the bottom line. Hopefully other companies will follow suit.



## INFO BYTE

Originally word about the industry was that the *Ratchet & Clank* franchise would finish up after its last PS2 outing, leaving room for a new franchise. Pfft, who ever believed that?



■ Pirates: so totally hot right now...



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- Newtype USA

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**ALDV FILMS**

## Le Chevalier D'Eon

Their meeting marked the  
beginning of the End



From Production I.G. (BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE)  
and the Director of RUROUNI KENSHIN

A woman has been found dead in a coffin floating through the Seine river. Now, D'Eon, the woman's brother is determined to search for her killer. With the support of both King and Queen, D'Eon and his allies will attempt to unravel the conspiracy behind his sister's murder. And his greatest ally may be her wandering spirit.

"Le Chevalier D'Eon, hands down, is one of the best anime of 2007."  
- Anime Planet



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# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ RELEASE: LATE 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION  
■ DEVELOPER: CAPCOM  
■ WEB: [www.capcom.com](http://www.capcom.com)



# DEVIL MAY CRY 4

Crack out the Kleenex, morose minions of hell – it's showtime!

Without a doubt, *Devil May Cry 4* is close to the top of the most anticipated list for PlayStation fans. While gamers from around the world were shocked to hear that Dante wasn't the focus of the latest foray, it only served to whet their appetites regarding the newcomer Nero. Thanks to Activision, we got the chance to have a glimpse at Capcom's upcoming action juggernaut.

The demo we played was essentially a showcase of three different areas. Firstly, the walled city of Fortuna, then an assault on a fortress perched atop a snowy peak, followed by a showdown with the hulking demon-beast Berial.

Set after Dante's attack on the Society of the Blade, Fortuna was rife with the marionette demons that we've seen

previously in the original *DMC*, implying that the demon lord Mundus had a hand in the chaos wracking the city. The berg appeared as a coastal city, with the warm glow of the setting sun glimmering off the water. As you battle your way through the city, you can admire the beautiful architecture: the intricate marble pillars imply an enlightened civilisation, but urban decay hints at sinister undertones.

Getting to grip with the action, the combat felt as intuitive as ever. Nero's double-barrelled revolver has a slightly slower rate of fire than Dante's twin pistols, but his Charge Shot ability packs more punch and can be built up more quickly. While Nero's swordplay is at a basic level similar to Dante's style, the ability to rev up the Red Queen with hellish power adds

another level of depth and strategy.

As expected, the big difference was the additional abilities afforded by the Devil Bringer, Nero's possessed right arm. At this early stage of play, the Devil Bringer afforded the player a powerful short range grab move, a limited grappling hook, as well as the ability to pull enemies towards you from range. One of the greatest things about the Devil Bringer is its usability against all enemies, including the bosses. *DMC4*'s consistent approach is not only refreshing, but incredibly satisfying.

With one of the biggest titles in the pipeline living up to the hype at this early stage, we can't wait to see what Capcom will do with the finished product. We guess we'll have to make do with *God of War II* in the meantime, eh?  **Nick O'Shea**

## THE UPPER CRUST



Of course, before things got down to business with the fire demon Berial, Nero showed he can talk smack with the best of them and back it up. During this exchange we did pick up on one thing that you can't glean from screenshots and probably won't have time to appreciate in the thick of it – the way Berial's sword oozes hypnotically like molten magma. Soon after, all hell broke loose (literally), and Berial started destroying the surroundings in his attempts to squash Nero like an ant. The key to surviving the encounter was judicious use of Devil Bringer, fantastically showcasing the new ability.

■ "Ice' to meet you!" (BLAST) "Give it up, Frost, your puns are pointless and ineffective!"

■ Marionettes. Like puppets – except full of demonic, murderous rage



# SNAKE NEEDS RECRUITS - ARE YOU IN?

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MUSIC BY NORIHIKO HIBINO / ENDING THEME "CALLING TO THE NIGHT" VOCALS BY NATASHA FARROW / DIRECTOR: MASAHIRO YAMAMOTO / PRODUCER: NORIAKI OKAMURA / GENERAL MANAGER & PRODUCER: HIDEO KOJIMA  
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KONAMI

PlayStation Portable

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# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS  
■ PLAYERS: 1 (MULTI TBC)  
■ RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: EA GAMES  
■ DEVELOPER: EA GAMES  
■ WEB: [www.ea.com/moh/airborne/index.jsp](http://www.ea.com/moh/airborne/index.jsp)



■ "Cease fire! I repeat, cease fire. Hanson are on the radio. I love these guys"



■ "Surprise old bean!" BLAM "Oh. So sorry old chap, I seem to have shot you in the noggin"



## MEDAL OF HONOR AIRBORNE

New games system, new style of game – *Medal of Honor* just got pimped

We're just going to go ahead and say it from the outset: *Medal of Honor Airborne* looks likely to be a seriously choice title. You should probably, nay almost definitely, buy it when it comes out. Sorry, we don't normally preview things so abruptly.

Normally you get a few notes on the game, maybe a zany pun or perhaps a question on why this writer looks so pissed off in his editorial photo.

The thing is, with *Airborne* there's so little to dislike they'd have to make an absolute pig's arse out of it for it not to be a classy entry into the franchise.

This is the first *Medal of Honor* to come out for the PS3 and, we'll be frank here, we've been tiring a little of this series of late. It's had the *Brothers in Arms* and *Call of Duty* series' stealing some of its thunder and – perhaps this is redundant for a WWII game – but the whole caper was feeling kind of dated.

'New system, new game' seems to be

the philosophy behind *Airborne*. You've had at the Germans in the trenches, on the beaches and in the towns – now you get to come at them from the air. Yes, you take on all the suicidal fun of being a paratrooper.

Live the entire process from the sweaty confines of the plane, to the deadly (but damn fine looking, graphics-wise) jump and time your landing so your chute's off and your weapon's ready.

You might be thinking, "Better graphics and I get to leap from a plane, that's it?" Well sit down and shut up. Not only do you get to experience your plunges to terra firma you actually get to select the location of your landings. That way no one mission ever plays out the same way.

Want to be a run-and-gun *Resistance*-style player? Then hop into the town square and blast the Huns like it's going out of style.

You'd rather sneak in the back way and bleed 'em, real quiet like? Pick a

less populated location and achieve your mission objectives that way.

Another feather in the fancy cap of this game (yeah, it's an odd analogy, just go with it) is something called "affordance". It's a term used in quite a few mediums (including philosophy) but in the case of this game it means your enemy AI is going to possess it. Broadly this means your enemy will have it ingrained in them to always seek the advantage in battle. Potential for higher ground? They'll go for it. See a weakness in your defences – they'll blast it. A war FPS lives and dies on its enemy AI (and to a lesser extent the AI of your comrades) and affordance promises to ratchet the tension and realism up a few good notches.

So, yeah, there it is. *Medal of Honor Airborne* looks like a blast and a half. How many sleeps until we get a go? That many? Well it's true what they say "[Waiting for a cool-looking] War [game] is hell!" **• Anthony O'Connor**

### IT'S NOT THE FALL THAT KILLS YA...

...it's the landing. That, at least, is what paratroopers (probably) say. It's certainly true of this game. You get to control your jump, avoiding flak and anti-aircraft fire, and control the landing. Get it right and you'll be ready for action almost immediately, get it wrong and you'll spend precious seconds untangling yourself from your chute. Of course both options are preferable to landing badly and snapping yourself in half. Be careful out there soldier.



■ "Alright, who superglued my hand to my helmet? It's not funny! We're about to go to war for God's sake!!"

#### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "This will be the most realistic experience ever. Affordance and the ability to pick what location you land in will really give the player a different experience every time they play it."

#### WHAT WE SAY:

■ Hell, we might just be believing the hype – but this puppy looks good. We can't remember the last time we were this excited about a WWII game. Don't let us down, EA Games, we know people...





For sheer pleasure there's no thinner condom.

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It's all about great sex.

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Use only as directed.

# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: STRATEGY  
■ PLAYERS: 1-16  
■ RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2008  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT  
■ DEVELOPER: UBISOFT SHANGHAI  
■ WEB: [www.ubi.com](http://www.ubi.com)



■ You've got to love tanks... you never have any trouble finding a parking spot

## ENDWAR

When two tribes go to war...

Wars. People die in them – it sucks and it hurts real bad. But do you know who never die in wars? Generals. The guys who plan out these conflicts, laid back chillin' in their crib while everyone else gets mowed down by machine gun fire or some really bigass grenade: that's where it's at baby. Just look at Donald Rumsfeld – has he ever caught a bullet in the lower abdomen? Or lost a leg in some humid, jungle hell? Hell to the no. He eats caviar surrounded by semi-naked hot chicks, and yes, smoking an enormous cuban cigar all the while.

*EndWar*, the latest game featured in the Tom Clancy universe, gives you the chance to be that guy; a fully-fledged master of war, sending young men to their death from an awesome position of safety – your own living room. An RTS set in the near future, *EndWar* is a game that could possibly turn the strategy genre on its head; firmly yanking it from the stubby hands of ancient, chubby PC users and placing it into the grip of us lithe, super

sexy, console users.

"But what about the control system?" we hear you whisper. "We need craploads of buttons, and the precision based movements that only a mouse and keyboard can provide". Pah! Such control systems belong in the Stone Age, peasants. With *EndWar*, Ubisoft is dragging the stagnant RTS genre out of the cesspool and equipping it with a whole

new control system, designed exclusively for console users.

Voice controls ("eh? Come again?"). You heard, we said VOICE CONTROLS! Yep, believe it or not, instead of bashing your keyboard or clumsily manoeuvring an analogue stick to control your minions, you can actually direct them with your voice, utilising a headset on your PS3. And despite the fact that most voice recognition

### INFO BYTE

Tom Clancy is one of only two authors to sell over two million copies on a first print in the US. The other? John Grisham...





systems in games currently fall into the ass sandwich category, Ubisoft has assured us that, at this point in the game's development, *EndWar* has no problem whatsoever regarding accuracy, and is approaching 100 percent accuracy when it comes to delivering commands.

It's all part of Ubisoft's attempt to "simplify, to make deep"; which, in short, means that there is a conscious attempt to simplify the means of control so that strategy occurs at the speed of thought. This will mean the best players will be the best strategists, as opposed to those that can navigate a needlessly complicated menu system the quickest. With voice recognition the time taken from idea to implication is drastically reduced and, if voice recognition is utilised effectively, this could simultaneously make *EndWar* more accessible and more in-depth.

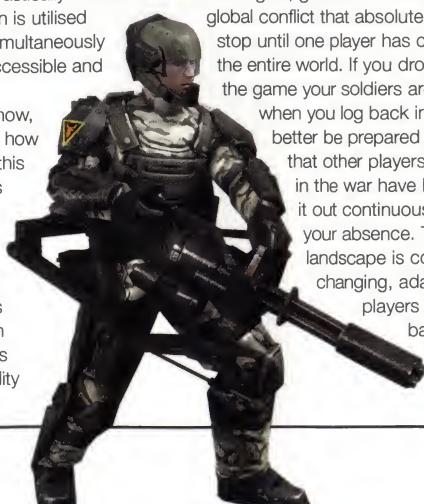
But there is, as of now, no real indication as to how effective and in-depth this voice control is and, as such, we can only take Ubisoft's word as to how accurate and workable the recognition is. Ubisoft's brass balls, however, in attempting to make this voice recognition a reality

is unquestionable. We hope it's successful, because *EndWar* has the potential to change the way in which games are played, period.

While voice recognition is undoubtedly *EndWar*'s greatest innovation, other areas of the game also push the boundaries of the RTS. This is most evident in the online multiplayer set-up and, more specifically, a brand new game mode that Ubisoft is calling the 'Theatre of War'.

The Theatre of War throws gamers head-first into full-scale world war which is constantly in upheaval, evolving and developing regardless of whether you are playing online or not. After choosing a faction, and customising your weapons and insignia, gamers can take part in a global conflict that absolutely will not stop until one player has control of the entire world. If you drop out of the game your soldiers are safe, but when you log back in you had better be prepared for the fact that other players involved in the war have been duking it out continuously during your absence. The tactical landscape is constantly changing, adapting to 16 players on a 24 hour basis.

Visually  
*EndWar*



## A CLANCY FANCY

We all know that Ubisoft and Tom Clancy go together like Jessica Alba and baby oil, and *EndWar* is no exception. This time round, Ubisoft is attempting to sew all the videogaming storyline elements into one seamless universe. Simply put, aspects and equipment from *Splinter Cell*, *Rainbow Six*, and *Ghost Recon* all appear in *EndWar* to some extent. For example, you'll be able to deploy the elite teams from Ubi's range of tactical shooters, and make use of their expertise in full scale wars.



### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "EndWar will allow gamers to lead their own armies against hundreds of others online in real global locations."

### WHAT WE SAY:

■ A very ambitious attempt at redefining a genre. We hope it succeeds...

# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: RACING  
■ PLAYERS: 1-10  
■ RELEASE: AUGUST 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ  
■ DEVELOPER: JUICE GAMES  
■ WEB: [www.juiced2hin.com](http://www.juiced2hin.com)



■ Racing game screenshots 101. A slight angle is always a plus

## INFO BYTE

There is more detail in one wheel of a car in *Juiced 2* than there was in an entire car in the original *Juiced*. We already told you that once, but we figured you could probably do with reminding.

# JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

In the heat of the night...

Illegal street racing. It's so 2003. We've moved on, and so have the kids. Boy racers are either tired of having their ridiculously riced-out rides impounded for months on end or they're sick of being prised out of twisted heaps of mangled metal and busted fibreglass wrapped around telegraph poles.

There's definitely been a shift. Illegal street racing is for suckers. Sanctioned events are all the rage these days. What was formerly an underground hobby can now be a pro career, and *Juiced 2* is tapping directly into this with its association with car show *Hot Import Nights*.

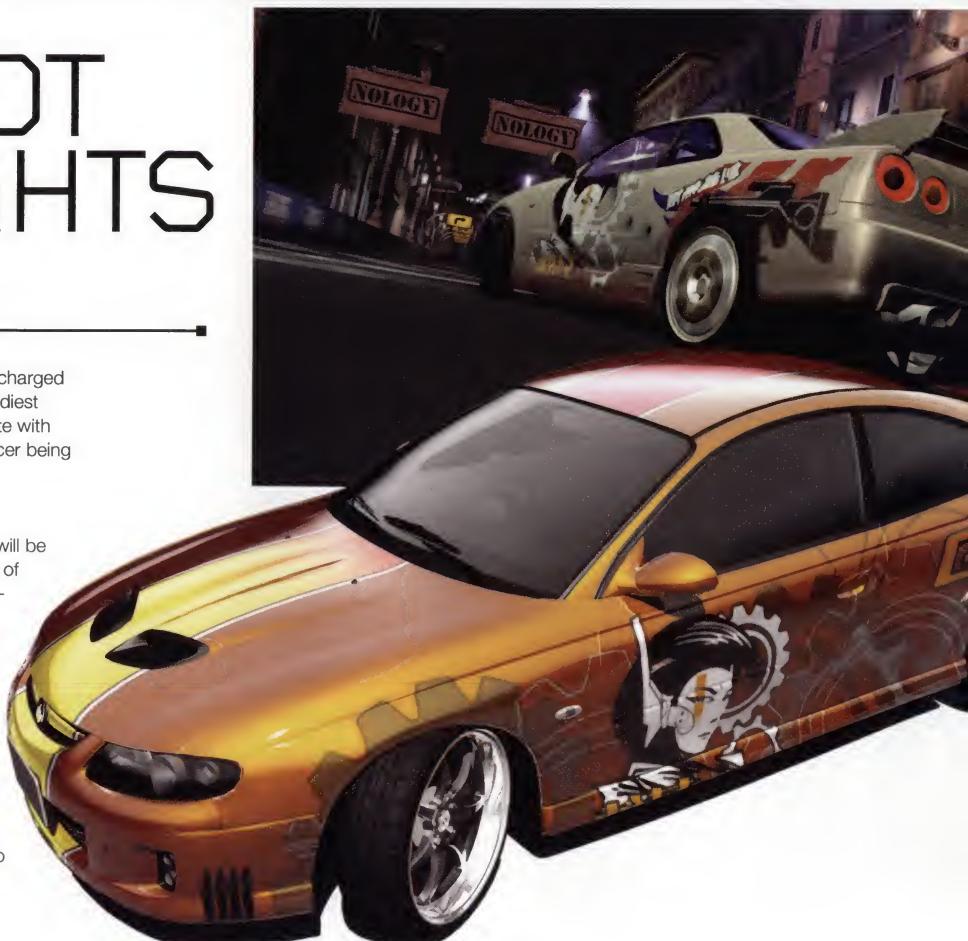
The *HIN* party atmosphere permeates every level of the experience, from the front-end interface to the track. The menus are a veritable laser show of lights and smoke, with highly polished hot rods gleaming and buxom chests heaving.

The races themselves are super-charged sojourns through the world's trendiest cities (including Sydney), complete with cheering crowds and an announcer being piped out onto the track itself.

### KEEP TALKING

The network aspect of *Juiced 2* will be massive. It'll be a sizeable chunk of the experience. The game is fully-functional offline, but from the sounds of it you'll be missing out on a significant portion of what's on offer if you don't make the splash and jump online. Juice Games is keen to create a dedicated *Juiced 2* community by including something for absolutely everybody.

People with a little too much time on their hands will be able to





■ Racing game screenshots 101. Flames equal a 10,000% increase of potential sales



■ Racing game screenshots 101. Massive angle, well done!



■ Racing game screenshots 101. Angle and motion blur? Now you're just showing off



■ Racing game screenshots 101. Oh, now you're not even trying...

jump online and gamble on races they're not even involved in. You don't have to be on the track to make a quid. Interestingly, gamblers will even be able to have an affect on the outcome of races – if only ever-so-small. Depending on how much you've wagered you'll receive a bunch of credits to use during the race. You can use these credits to either cheer the driver you've plonked a wad of cash on to emerge victorious, or diss the other drivers. Cheers and boos will appear as a picture-in-picture on racers' screens, but it's not just to boost or lower your confidence – it actually affects your nitrous supply. Receive a cheer and your nitrous will receive a tiny nudge up. Receive a boo and a small portion will be shaved off. It raises a few balancing questions, like how the favourite will have the most nitrous-boosting cheers (which, admittedly, is to be expected) and whether this will make some races forgone conclusions – but it's certainly unique. You'll even be able to bet up until the last lap of the race, as the odds are calculated on-the-fly.

The artistically-inclined (guys who sleep until two in afternoon and live in lofts with a cat called Chairman Meow) will be able to create vehicular masterpieces by inventing custom paint jobs (from standard metallics and mattes to extravagant finishes like pearlescent or flake – with the ability to

adjust flake size) and stretch, scale, rotate and overlap up to 50 layers of vinyl, decals (from a pool of more than 2000) and your own customised shapes on any panel you choose. But it doesn't stop there. You can either sell the car or just the design, online, for *Juiced* money. Each and every car will have its own pink slip that will show who has owned it and what's been done to it – and the designer will have a permanent credit on it. Cars that perform well, win major races and earn stellar reputations will have these noted on its pink slip too, and will be worth more in the game's online auction system.

Then, of course, there's the racing itself. There'll be two main modes, circuit and drift. Unfortunately, *Juiced* 2 has been pruned of the rather fun showoff mode in the original and is also set to ship sans drag racing – something we criticised *Need for Speed Carbon* quite heavily for. Nonetheless, both circuit racing and drifting will be broken up into a series of further modes. The drifting is arguably the more fun of the two; a looser handling model makes for some beat-it-down boner inducing (if that sort of thing turns you on) powerslides. We got to try out a few different cars on the specialised drift circuits. The stock Toyota Sprinter Trueno was super-sluggish but fairly easy to whip about and the overweight '76 Ford Gran Torino was a fickle mistress – her ample girth making wrestling her around the

track a bit tricky, but a bit of a hoot.

#### VROOM VROOM... AHEM...

The first *Juiced* was a solid, if derivative, racer that stumbled mainly due to some uninspiring track design. Nonetheless, it did rather well.

*Juiced* 2 really ought to do better. Naturally we'll reserve judgement until we review the final product, but *Juiced* 2 really is a marked improvement on its predecessor. In fact, with the real-world focus, the robust online mode, the immense visual customisation potential and a stable of around 80 international ponies it's definitely going to give *Need for Speed* a run for its money. We'll be most interested to see if EA's street racing series will be changing tack in line with changing attitudes, moving from open streets to closed circuits and bringing a professional vibe on board. We suspect it will, but in the meantime *Juiced* 2 should definitely keep our motors running. **■ Luke Reilly**

#### THE GAMBLING GENE

The more we learn about *Juiced* 2's Driver DNA, a system that records and displays racing traits, the more intriguing it sounds. The game measures and rates driving and betting behaviour, displaying characteristics for everyone to see. If you're online and you notice someone loves a bet but is rubbish at racing there's a good chance you can make some cash off the sap. Also, if you spot a player with super DNA you can download it and apply it to your AI teammates (so they'll behave like the original player) for your own offline team races.



#### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Juiced 2: HIN brings street racing to life, allowing players to test their skills at live street racing events against a backdrop of DJs, models and musicians."

#### WHAT WE SAY:

■ An ambitious racer that should do well.

# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: PARTY  
■ PLAYERS: 1-8  
■ RELEASE: JULY 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY  
■ DEVELOPER: SONY  
■ WEB: www.au.playstation.com



# SINGSTAR

"I ain't happy, I'm feeling glad, I got sunshine in a bag..."

**S**ingStar. There's a new one coming. It's got 30 tracks on it. You sing along to them.

That's what we'd have said if this were a new PS2 *SingStar* title. Don't get us wrong; we do have a bit of a soft spot for the series and its capacity to entertain even the most ardent PlayStation-phobes. However, the last seven haven't exactly been revolutionary, so aside from reporting on the fresh tracklist there was never much to say (aside from the usual rant on how the women we play *SingStar* with are *nothing* like the impossibly hot lifestyle models Sony marches out for each *SingStar* release. Who looks THAT seductive while playing a videogame? And who wears heels in the LOUNGEROOM?

And WHY aren't you at our house?).

*SingStar* on PS3, however, is a different story altogether. *SingStar* certainly had its highs (*Rocks!*, *Legends*, '80s) and its lows (*Anthems...* rubbish) but in terms of its core offering it peaked yonks ago. The PS3 debut marks a much-needed move towards the future with digital distribution at the forefront.

Yes, the game itself will ship with 30 new tracks (complete with HD videos to boot) but the listing hasn't been revealed (although we know OutKast and our own lovable soundtrack whores Wolfmother will feature). Yes, you still sing along. But the real meat of the new *SingStar* will be the SingStore. From day one there'll be more than 300 songs available to download,



#### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "SingStar on PlayStation 3 stays true to the spirit that has made *SingStar* a global hit – and adds new features and more choice to make every *SingStar* party experience truly unique."

#### WHAT WE SAY:

■ Test... one, two...

# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ RELEASE: JULY 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION  
■ DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES  
■ WEB: www.ttgames.com



■ Bumblebee now turns into a Camaro on account of the VW Beetle being "a bit sissy"

# TRANSFORMERS

Autobots, TRANSFORM! Chi-kou-koo-keh-kih-kek...

**T**he Transformers whip the emu's ass! Their arrival on Earth, courtesy of the upcoming Michael Bay live-action feature, will stop traffic in Tibet, force mothers into labour and make Miles Davis seem about as cool as Germaine Greer. Maybe. At the very least it ought to be better than *Pearl Harbor*. No matter though, because the PS3 is set to get a slick third-person action packer mixing cyclonic bouts of mechanical metamorphosis with the ol' open-world, sandbox level design.

*Transformers* will feature two separate campaigns. The Autobot strand will cling tightly to the arc of the film as players control Bumblebee, Iron Hide, Optimus Prime and more on a quest to bust some

Deceptijerks while the Decepticon missions will stray more from the film's plot and feature Starscream and Megatron out to take over Earth! Bastards.

As mentioned, the player will be plopped into massive sandbox levels where they can transform at any time, pickup telegraph poles, cars, trucks – anything – and use them as weapons, and demolish any building in site! However, there will be a good-bad metre of sorts that will see the military called in to terminate the robotic presence if too much collateral damage is caused – even if the righteous Prime is the accidental perpetrator.

Expect the review of this Gen-X golden child next month. ■ **James Ellis**



#### INFO BYTE

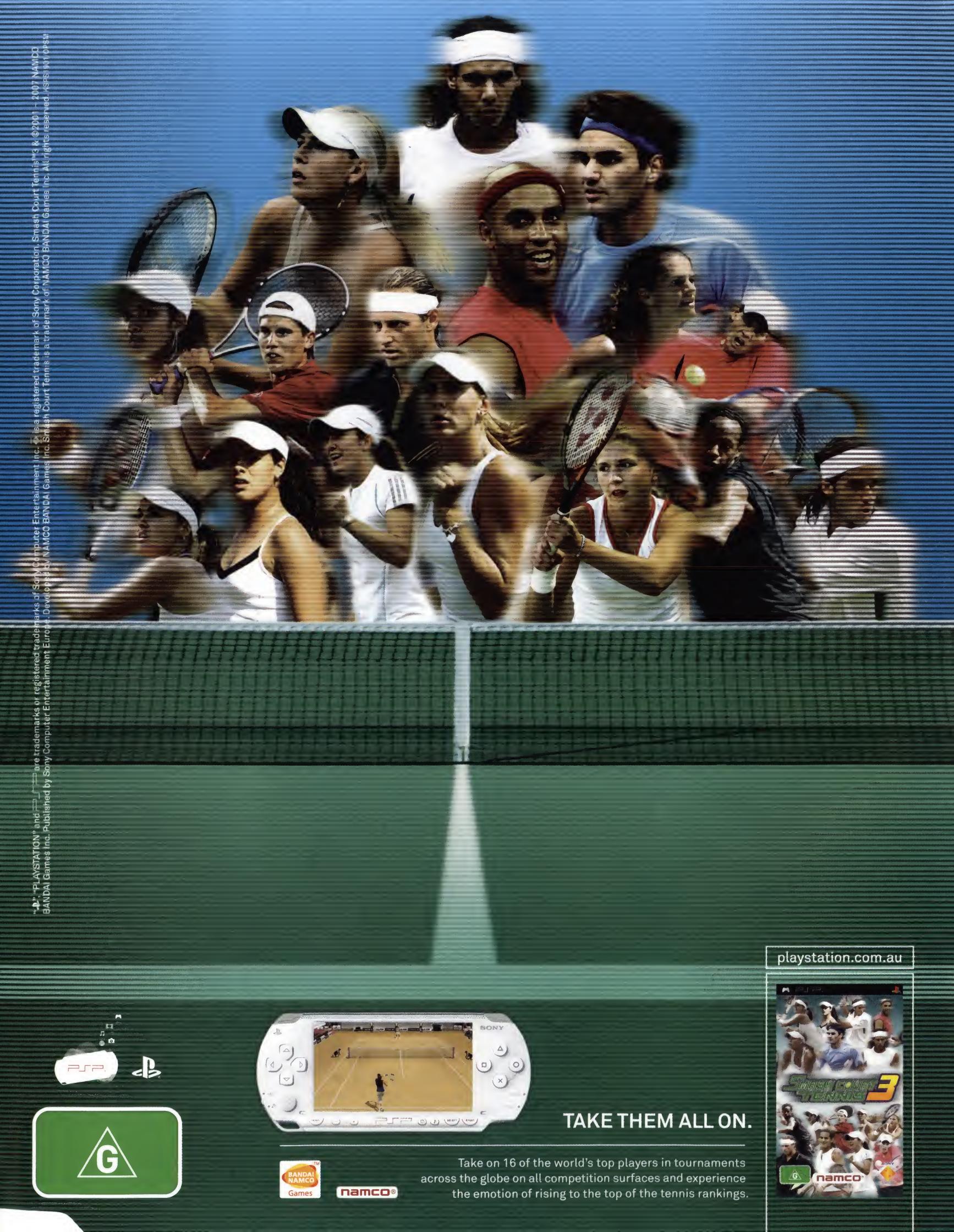
Frank Welker and Peter Cullen, the original voice actors for Megatron and Optimus Prime respectively, will be contributing, reprising their roles for the game!

#### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Transformers has all of the elements necessary to translate incredibly well into videogames."

#### WHAT WE SAY:

■ Such sweet nostalgia might see kids of the '80s donning their old school uniforms and returning to the potty.



[playstation.com.au](http://playstation.com.au)

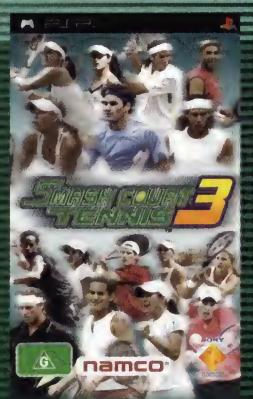


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# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ PLAYERS: 1-4  
■ RELEASE: JUNE 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: TAKE 2  
■ DEVELOPER: SEVEN STUDIOS  
■ WEB: [www.2kgames.com](http://www.2kgames.com)



# FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER

One better than the Terrific Trio...

With one of Marvel's favourite super teams making a return to the silver screen, you better know it's time for them to make another appearance on PlayStation systems. While they battled the dastardly Doctor Victor Von Doom in their previous outing, this time the team has to face off against their toughest challenge yet – the immortal herald of Galactus, the Silver Surfer. With a cosmic being of unimaginable power preparing the Earth's destruction, how can they possibly stand up to this new

interplanetary foe?

And so begins the third-person action extravaganza, *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*. Even moreso than the previous *Fantastic Four* game, the emphasis will be squarely on co-op play, with *RoSS* supporting four players simultaneously, and also a new Fusion Attack System, that allows you to meld together the team's powers to devastating effect. The PS3 version will even make use of the motion-sensing abilities of the SIXAXIS controller for special Boost

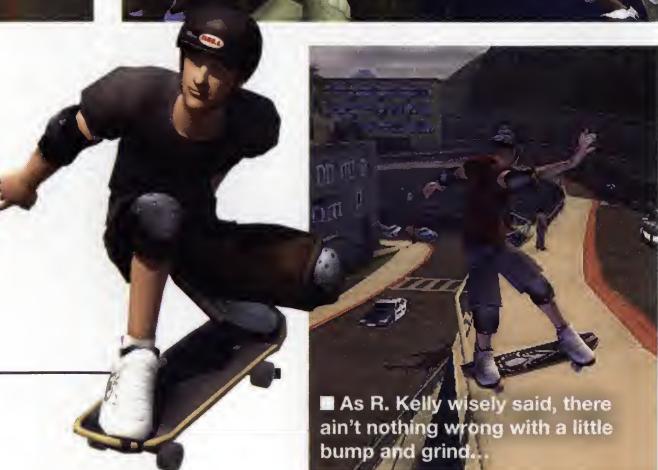
Attacks. If you're worried that dealing with one chrome waxhead won't be enough to keep you interested, then you can rest easy, as you'll be up against a veritable pantheon of the Four's foes from across the ages, with the insidious Skrulls already announced as a definite for the title.

With plenty of unlockable content and classic Marvel styling, *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer* could be a decent companion to the film, time will tell if it can bring the 'Clobberin' Time' to *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*. **• Nick O'Shea**



# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: SPORTS  
■ PLAYERS: 1-2  
■ RELEASE: JUNE 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION  
■ DEVELOPER: SUPERVILLAIN STUDIOS  
■ WEB: [www.activision.com](http://www.activision.com)



# TONY HAWK'S DOWNHILL JAM

No Swiss rolls or scones here – it's not that sort of jam

With more than a little inspiration from EA's SSX franchise, *Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam* opts to forego the snow and take to the asphalt. With tracks based on the sloping streets of San Francisco to the dizzying altitudes of the Swiss Alps, Antoine Hawk, Esq. is taking this sensation worldwide.

While no pro-skaters other than the talented Mr. Hawk feature, you can play as the man himself, any one of a selection of fictional boarders or even create your own custom skater from scratch. As well as the

core Race mode, there are plenty of other gameplay modes, such as Trick Attack, Slalom, Airtime and the most perplexingly titled game mode of all, Yard Sale. Unless Tony's looking to make some quick cash on the side, we have no idea what this could possibly entail.

While high speed thrills are the name of the game, putting together some gnarly tricks will earn you the boost that can send you rocketing past your competition. This leads to the game becoming a delicate balance of nailing as many ticks as you

can for maximum speed, without pushing the envelope too hard and letting the other racers pass you as you take a nasty bail.

With the *Tony Hawk* games becoming more complex, as the years go by, *Downhill Jam's* simple and approachable design looks like it could possibly be a fun diversion from the increasingly technical nature of Activision's landmark skating series. **• Nick O'Shea**

#### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam brings to the PlayStation 2 the extreme speed of downhill racing."

#### WHAT WE SAY:

■ Could prove to be a refreshing change of pace for the *Tony Hawk* series.



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# PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ PLAYERS: 1-4  
■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION  
■ DEVELOPER: CAPCOM  
■ WEB: [www.capcom.com](http://www.capcom.com)

■ Remember that *Dragonheart* movie with 'Shhhhean' Connery? Yeah, that sucked

# MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM 2

The game is afoot...

**A**h yes... *Monster Hunter Freedom*. Known lovingly as 'The Hunt' around the office, this shining example of gameplay and technical achievement lies at the heart of many of our PSP collections. When the chance to play *MHF2* at the Activision offices arose, we were there faster than you could say 'JESUS CHRIST, IT'S A DRAGON! GET IN THE CAVE!'

In the world of *Monster Hunter*, the land abounds with numerous fantastical, ferocious creatures. To protect the villages, brave hunters must rise to the task of fighting these savage beasts. Successful hunters are hailed as heroes, and

unsuccessful hunters, well, end up as dinosaur dung.

*Monster Hunter Freedom 2* expands further on the concepts in previous games, further refining the fusion of new technology

and old school gameplay. Capcom has created a brand new mountain village for this iteration that serves as a hub for your journeys, with all the usual trappings of the farm, smithy, merchants and guild hall to support your hunting venture.

Hunters can track their quarry through eight lush environments that boast some of the best visuals on the PSP. Along the way, you'll be faced with beasts from slavering velociraptors to gargantuan dragons, and everything in between. Some of the new creatures that you'll encounter early on are giant enemy crabs (*Genji* anyone?) and aggressive pink baboons the size of a car that decimate you with their noxious farts.

As well as the current arsenal of weaponry, there are four new weapon classes added into the mix. The Katana class will no doubt be a favourite, and provides a good combination of attack power, reach, and finesse. The Gunlance is essentially a massive cannon with a

bayonet strapped to it, and can fire off short range bursts or charge up to belch a massive fiery explosion. The Hunting Horn is another strange hybrid that couples a gigantic war hammer with a musical instrument that can be played to give beneficial effects to your hunting party. Last, but far from least are the Bows, which provide much faster ranged support than the current Bowguns, and for added effect, you can tip your arrows with a range of poisons and oils.

As you play through the game, the trophies you hew and the resources you gather can be used to craft better equipment. There's more armour than you can swing a smithing hammer at, each with its own unique look, attributes and special ability enhancements.

Seeing as *Monster Hunter Freedom 2* is still some ways off, do yourself a favour and check out the original to make the wait more bearable. **• Nick O'Shea**



## WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The non-stop epic hunt-or-be-hunted adventure continues with more content and options than ever before."

## WHAT WE SAY:

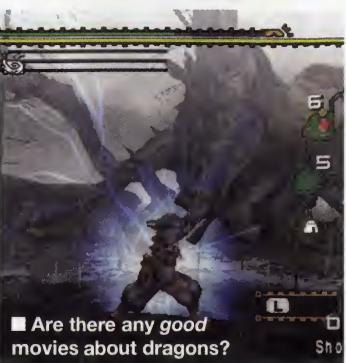
■ We know it's the goods, but September is so far away! Can. Not. Wait.

## BIG... LIKE, GODZILLA BIG

The *Monster Hunter* series is utterly massive in Japan, with the previous games a riotous success. When our lucky Nihonjin neighbours got their hands on *Monster Hunter Freedom 2* earlier this year, it sold like hotcakes and has since shifted in excess of a million copies.

Sadly, the franchise doesn't do quite as admirably in the west, and while *Monster Hunter Freedom* did pretty well on PSP, the original *Monster Hunter* on the PS2 didn't sell well enough to ensure a localisation for the PS2 sequel. For shame, PS2 owners.

Luckily enough, *Monster Hunter Freedom 2* includes all of *Monster Hunter 2*'s features and then some, so bring on September!



■ Are there any good movies about dragons?



## PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: SHOOTER  
■ PLAYERS: 1-16  
■ RELEASE: LATE 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION  
■ DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS  
■ WEB: [www.lucasarts.com/games](http://www.lucasarts.com/games)



# STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT: RENEGADE SQUADRON

Hands up who wants to be a Wookiee with a jetpack!?

**T**here are certain collections of words; phrases, if you will, that we at OPS like to hear. Such as: "You have pleased me as no man has before", "Nah mate, tonight the drinks are on me," and "developed specifically for the PSP."

Let's do the game role call; *Daxter*: ruled the school, developed specially for PSP. *GTA:VCS* admittedly got ported to the PS2 but it started on the wee black box; and *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror*, which kicks eleven fruit flavours of arse, and was developed with the PSP's strengths and

weaknesses in mind.

The point we're staggering towards is that on our recent visit to LucasArts we got a rare hands-on look at *Star Wars Battlefront: Renegade Squadron*.

According to reps at LucasArts *Star Wars Battlefront II* did crazy well on the PSP - it's one of its best selling titles (something like 10 million units sold since 2004). This didn't thrill us too much. Just because it's popular doesn't mean it's good. Look at *Big Brother!* Or rather, don't. Regardless, we got the goods on the game and it looks the business.

The story is a tale of a ragtag ensemble of battle-hardened rogues, scoundrels and various other violent scumbags - with hearts of gold - assembled by Han Solo. Yep, Han the man is in this game. To what extent, however, is unknown at this stage.

After all it starts with the evacuation of Yavin 4 (*A New Hope*) and ends with the Battle of Endor (*Return of the Jedi*). So we figure he's probably like Charlie in *Charlie's*

*Angels* - heard but not seen.

*Renegade Squadron* has some unique features. It boasts a solid single-player story with actual characters and events. You'll fight in the Valley of the Sith on Korriban, dogfight in space dodging the remains of Alderaan and shoot Ewoks. Not because you're supposed to - but because it's fun.

What impressed us the most about *SWB:RS* was the customisability. For instance in previous *Battlefront* entries you had to play as certain character types. Now you can mix, match, and fight using any combination of race, kit and weapons.

Also the gameplay has been given an overhaul to make it more PSP-friendly. Now you can lock onto targets without the camera swooping everywhere. And the graphics are sexy as hell. Oh and did we mention the 16-player online battles? Oh yes, the force is strong with this one - we'll keep a keen eye out for it as it looks to be quite the belter. ■ **Anthony O'Connor**

### THE SECRETS OF THE FORCE

The LucasArts building has more security than the Death Star itself. Likewise the staff are tight-lipped about the surprises it has in store for this game. However two nuggets we managed to pry were:

- 1) There will be moments, as in other *Battlefronts*, where you can play as top tier players. We can't wait to find out who.
- 2) Everyone agreed the space flight in *Battlefront* "kinda sucked". It's been completely changed for this one. We're hoping for the better.



### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ This is the first time you'll have almost complete freedom with the *Battlefront* universe. There's the option to just flat out battle but also a really strong single-player component.

### WHAT WE SAY:

■ We're impressed. *Star Wars* has burnt us before, but we have faith in this one.



## PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: FIGHTING  
■ PLAYERS: 1-2 (Wi-Fi)  
■ RELEASE: JUNE 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI  
■ DEVELOPER: DIMPS  
■ WEB: [www.atari.com.au](http://www.atari.com.au)



■ Mel Gibson's anime sequel to *Man Without a Face* bombed without a trace...



■ Really, why do *all* anime characters have the ability to shoot big ass bolts of lightning?

# DRAGON BALL Z: SHIN BUDOKAI 2

More Dragon Ball Z Shin-anigans...

**A**s the battle for best anime based brawler intensifies, many pretenders enter the fold. Others blend into one another. We're sure you've seen the "Naruto vs. Bleach vs. Marvel Superheroes vs. Capcom Super-Duper, Beat 'em Up Spectacular", proudly brought to you by Vinnie Mac and the WWE, available on Pay Per View for only \$49.95. Yet one has taken a slightly different path – *Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2*.

Any time we hear the words "alternate timeline" we get exited. More often than

not, it's the shiznit. Through a few creative tweaks to the *DBZ* timeline, Trunks is now the most powerful entity on the planet, with most of the *DBZ* cast killed by androids. To show everyone how hard he is, he decides to takes on all comers in a world tournament. Wouldn't you know it, a new badass wants to rain on his parade, and the adventure begins...

Story mode has you tackling various new foes, with certain criteria required to ensure victory. The story then breaks into loads of "Choose your Own Adventure"

style branches, where you can retrace your steps if necessary to right a previous wrong. What's really interesting is the fact that the game can legitimately end with just two battles under your belt! You can also duke it out with all the "classic" *DBZ* characters against man (via Wi-Fi) or machine (arcade mode).

*Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2*... kudos for at least trying to break away from the standard anime 2D beat 'em up and try something a little outside the box. Get what we're saying? **■ Dave Kozicki**



### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Takes the intense two-player wireless battles and thrilling combative gameplay made popular in last year's hit to the next level."

### WHAT WE SAY:

■ It's all *DBZ Shin Budokai* was... all shiny and new with that little bit more!

## PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: RPG  
■ PLAYERS: 1-2 (Wi-Fi)  
■ RELEASE: JUNE 2007  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI  
■ DEVELOPER: KUJUENTERTAINMENT  
■ WEB: [www.atari.com.au](http://www.atari.com.au)



■ Quite possibly the greenest dragon of all time



■ 'Extreme' piggy in the middle always ended in tears

# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: TACTICS

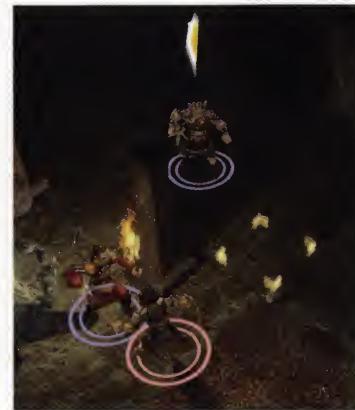
Roll the dice...

**D**ungeons & Dragons has long been the realm of the super geek. Visions of bespectacled, pimple ridden youths, hibernating in basements, adhering to the Dungeon Master as they equip their Mace +5 to turkey slap an ogre back to the Dark Ages immediately spring to mind. Sweet, sweet victory, or the bitter agony of defeat is always a mere roll of the dice away... Say what you will, these guys paved the way for the RPG, and gaming wouldn't be what it is today without them. Sprawling tales of tremendous

courage, or heinous evil await you, so choose your alignment carefully, trick out your party and it's off to save or condemn the world. Those of you not familiar with *D&D*, don't be afraid, it's not rocket science – far from it. Everything is turn-based, whether you're surveying the scene, or laying the smackdown. When attacking, a coloured circle at your enemy's feet indicates the success rate of each attack. It's like Twister for kicking ass. Green is the money shot... C'mon baby... Oh snap! I missed? Damn that red!

Missions feel more episodic, rather than catering to the traditional RPG flow, but the constant shuffling of party member numbers for each adventure will definitely keep you on your toes and scratching the old noggin strategising.

*D&D: Tactics* is a bit of a wild card. It isn't exactly what we were expecting, not as much greasy hair and pimples, but there's definitely enough retro gold and some pretty cool ideas to pique our curiosity. Can't wait to see how this one plays out. **■ Dave Kozicki**



### WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Gamers will be granted an accurate *D&D* experience... with robust multiplayer and the ability to extend gameplay thru downloadable content."

### WHAT WE SAY:

■ Looks like there's plenty of life left in this old dog...



PG

Mild gambling references

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WORDS: LUKE REILLY

# SEMPER FI

The *Call of Duty* series is a yardstick for World War II shooters. Thanks to *Medal of Honor*'s fall from grace and despite the best efforts of *Brothers In Arms*, series creator Infinity Ward has the ruthlessly competitive sub-genre stitched up. But Infinity Ward is tired of living in the past.

World War II was the largest and deadliest conflict in human history, resulting in the deaths of around 60 million people – two-thirds of whom were civilians. Spanning 1939 to 1945, WWII was, in fact, the combination of two different conflicts – one in the Pacific and the other in Europe. Covering China, South-East Asia and the South Pacific as well as Europe, the Soviet Union and Northern Africa, it was (and still is) the largest theatre of war ever.

100 million soldiers from over 60 nations were mobilised in a conflict that stretched out over 20 million square kilometres and utilised more than 3000 submarines, destroyers, battleships and aircraft carriers, more than a quarter of a million tanks, nearly a million aircraft and around 4.5 million trucks. Nearly 900 million metric tonnes of iron ore and seven billion metric tonnes of coal were churned through by the war industry to create these instruments of destruction,

and over eight billion barrels of oil were required to keep them running.

That's a lot of math, but when you're describing the largest war in the history of mankind you need big numbers. This, for those that still don't understand, is why there are so many Second World War shooters out there.

It was *kind* of a big deal.

We hope we've cleared a few things up for you.

Although, in this case, it's a moot point – because *Call of Duty 4* is leaving it all behind.

## YOU CAN STOP TALKING ABOUT WORLD WAR II NOW

We will. We think we've made our point. Still, you might argue that it's crazy a series that has become synonymous with the Second World War would ditch it all. However, Infinity Ward's argument is that

the fundamental principles of the *Call of Duty* series aren't tied to any one era.

Past, present – it doesn't matter as long as it's fun, and you still get to blow stuff up.

It's the latter for *Call of Duty 4*. The present. And there'll be plenty to blow up.

Infinity Ward has taken *Call of Duty* from the '40s and plonked it smack bang in 2007. Or thereabouts. What this facelift means for the series is a new arsenal of modern killing tools, some equally modern vehicles and a brand new, modern conflict.

A thoroughly modern arse-kicking in other words. You can do CNN via satellite in the morning, shoot some people before lunch and video-chat to your wife after dinner. In the nude if you want.

## ANYHOW...

Indeed. Well, fortunately for us, there aren't any contemporary conflicts raging that even come close to measuring up





to the grandiose scale of WWII. The war on terrorism certainly has far-reaching, global consequences but nothing about it compares to the epic battles of yore. The current kerfuffle in the Gulf isn't much chop either. It's a tragic war, no doubt – and the loss of life, both military and civilian, is abhorrent. But in the scheme of world conflict, chances are it'll never be much more than footnote in the history books. A pimple on the 21st century's increasingly

epic arse.

Good for us – we can live without the fear of being drafted or having our towns carpet-bombed.

Not so good for videogames.

You see, modern warfare just isn't the same. We don't want to trivialise it because it's still as dangerous as all hell – but a lot of the time armed encounters are little more than a few, brief seconds of wild gunfire from the enemy before

they run away to build car-bombs.

The other problem is the enemy itself. They've got quite a way to go before they're a patch on the Nazis. Some of these guys barely know which end of the AK-47 they're supposed to point at whatever they want to die.

No. It's different these days.

This is why Infinity Ward has been a little... creative. Political correctness is just a side-effect. Ororah.

#### OORAH?

The conflict in *Call of Duty 4* is entirely fictional, but don't let that make you think it isn't plausible. Infinity Ward needed a good, old-fashioned ground war to keep the action intense and pulses racing – none of this blink-and-you-miss-it insurgent malarkey.

So it invented one.

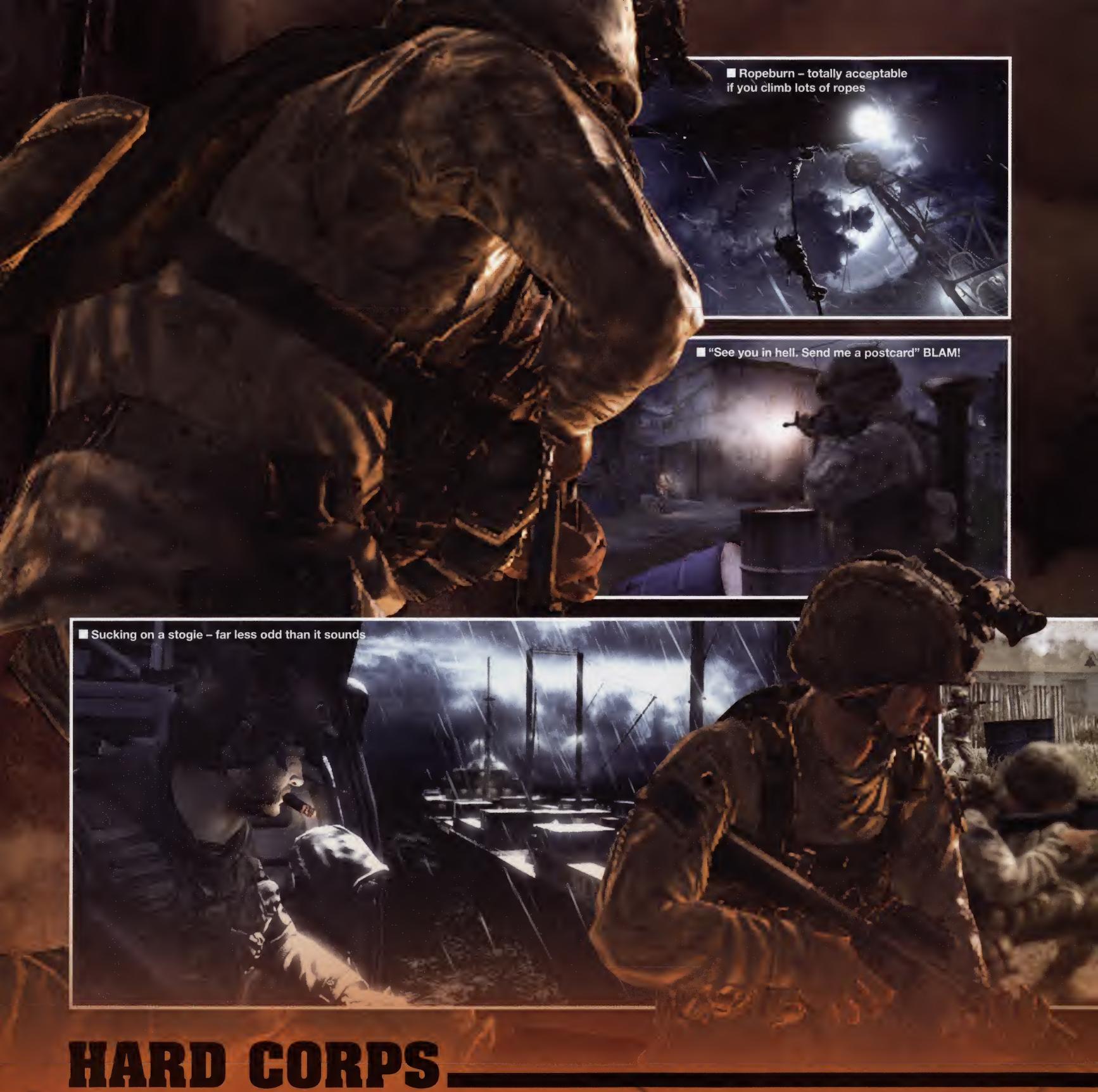
Infinity Ward enlisted the services of a number of Hollywood writers, skilled at



■ Chopper insertion – not nearly as inappropriate as you'd think



■ "Keith – if I don't make it, you can have my moustache" (awkward silence)



## HARD CORPS

### SAS

The Special Air Service Regiment (SAS) is the special forces unit of the British Army. SAS operators, along with their US Navy SEAL and Australian SAS counterparts, are considered to be the best in the business – highly trained in “looking hard” and “killing you good”. The SAS is the oldest special forces unit in the world, kicking arse since 1942, and is the model for many current international special forces units like the US Army’s 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (Delta Force), Germany’s Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK), France’s 1st Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment and, naturally, the Australian SAS and New Zealand SAS.



### FORCE RECON

Force Recon (United States Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance) units are the special forces of the US Marine Corps – highly trained, specialised units. Force Recon personnel are adept at small-scale, high risk operations like hostage rescue, deep reconnaissance and capture. They’re American, and thus tend to make a lot of noise when they’re around and hog all the coolest (and most expensive) toys, but that doesn’t mean they don’t know their shit. Force Recon was baptised by fire during the Vietnam War and has been busting chops ever since.



crafting episodic content and cliffhangers, to imbue *Call of Duty 4* with an exciting yet credible story. One minute you'll be dropping onto a cargo ship on the Black Sea, the next you'll be charging through a dusty, besieged Middle Eastern town. You'll go from being involved in an assassination attempt 15 years prior, to being perched high above the battleground in a Cobra attack helicopter raining death from the clouds. *Call of Duty 4* will be even more cinematic than its forebears, taking place over 30 days of dramatic conflict. But what's the story?

It's simple really. A renegade Russian general, Zakiev, and a diabolical dictator from the Middle East, Al Hassad, are causing all sorts of grief for the global community. The two evil buggers have, along with their respective henchmen, been dubbed The Four Horsemen. Ominous indeed.

It'll be up to you to sort them out.

Probably by killing them, we presume.

#### QUOTE. LET'S CONTINUE...

The combat in *Call of Duty 4* will centre around two regions – Eastern Europe and Russia, and the Middle East. The British SAS will be dealing with Zakiev in Russia while the United States' Force Recon will take on Al Hassad in the Middle East. These special forces units are highly trained and highly lethal. They know their jobs inside out (which, coincidentally, is

how they tend to leave their opponents).

We were taken aback when we saw *Call of Duty 4*. The visuals are an absolute treat and the action is laid on thick and fast. The game is still a fairly simple affair – shoot the bad guys before they shoot you. It hasn't fallen into the trap of becoming too technical, bogged down in slow-paced, fiddly rubbish. The modern weaponry may be leaps and bounds ahead of previous low-tech *Call of Duty* arsenals, but the game hasn't become a victim of its own gizmos.

Modern shooters often have a preoccupation with complex interfaces and swamping you with swathes of future toys. *Call of Duty 4* doesn't. It sticks to its roots. The weapons are cutting-edge (the Javelin rocket launcher is a highlight – look it up), but there are no fancy *Ghost Recon*-style heads-up displays to distract you from the task at hand.

Futuristic shooters make you feel like you're in a videogame – which defeats the purpose of playing a videogame. *Call of Duty 4* is all about atmosphere. It doesn't want to clutter the screen with graphic overlays; it wants you to feel like you're on a battlefield. And it does.

The first level we were shown was a raid on a cargo ship being tossed about in a storm on the Black Sea. Lightning lit up the sky and rain whipped across the screen. The team of SAS operators fast-rope from a chopper to the deck

before methodically moving from room to room and between containers. The visuals were truly terrific – the amount of detail is astonishing. Characters don't just create dynamic shadows, they self-shadow – meaning crumpled clothing, bits of kit and other protrusions on their exteriors create shadows elsewhere on their own bodies. Metal containers glistened with an uncannily realistic sheen as sheets of rainwater flowed down them. Saltwater sprayed the deck courtesy of the waves crashing against the hull. Muzzle flashes illuminated darkened cabins. The sound was also in a league of its own, from the barked orders between the squad to the cracking thunder that split our skulls open.

The second level was equally impressive. Its cheeky moniker, 'Charlie Don't Surf', is a reference to Francis Ford Coppola's Vietnam War classic *Apocalypse Now* and it's well earned. Sweeping in low over the ocean in a squadron of Black Hawks, it's not at all unlike the famous chopper assault scene in the 1979 flick (all that's missing is 'The Ride of the Valkyries' blazing in the background). As the helis hovered in toward a rebel-held village they left concentric circles on the ocean as the rotor blast struck the water. When they reached the shore unguided RPGs streaked through the sky to greet them, the telltale spiralling wisps of white smoke betraying their paths through the air. Hasty, sporadic gunfire erupted from below, and bullets pinged from the underbelly of the aircraft the player-controlled soldier was hunkered down in.

The only way you'd get closer to real modern combat would be with a crew cut and a new career at Quantico.

This isn't a new phenomenon – games have been aiming for this for over a decade and many have achieved it. However, *Call of Duty 4* is aiming to push the envelope even further. Several military advisors have consulted with Infinity Ward to make the final product as authentic as possible, including Hank Kiersey, a retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel. Not only is Kiersey a combat veteran of the first Gulf War but he also served three years at the Army's premier training centre where he trained over 1000 infantry platoons.

The team has also worked tirelessly with even the tiniest details, particularly how to recreate human eye behaviour on-screen. Infinity Ward has gone to great lengths to perfect its depth-of-field effects when aiming down the sight of your weapon (the blurring effect that occurs around an object or person you're focused on). The team has noted that the human eye sees night-vision different to how a camera lens sees it, so they've worked hard making sure *Call of Duty 4*'s night-vision looks legit. They've even looked at how low-intensity light tends to create a slight halo effect around people and implemented this into the game. Incidentally, *Call of Duty 4* will run at a super-smooth 60 frames per second – because anything less just won't do.

*Call of Duty 3*, developed by Treyarch, was let down because it seemed unpolished. This will not be the case for *Call of Duty 4*. Infinity Ward wants its latest to be THE shooter to beat on PS3.

After seeing it in action, it's no stretch to believe that this could very well be the case. ▀



## THE PAST IS HISTORY?



*Call of Duty 4*'s modern-day makeover isn't necessarily the death knell for the series' World War II exploits. Grant Collier, Infinity Ward President/co-studio head, is certainly excited about the new direction of the series but won't rule out re-visiting the era – or any other era for that matter. *Call of Duty* isn't tied to any one time or place. Could we expect a range of instalments inspired by conflicts throughout the century? Here's hoping.

## BROTHERS IN ARMS



The single-player campaign was the focus of our demo, but a few minor multiplayer details were discussed. *Call of Duty 4* multiplayer will feature persistent statistics (wins/losses, headshots, preferred weapon, etc.), an experience point system that will allow you to unlock new weapons and skins as you progress and a number of new modes, including lethal mode (one shot, one kill, no health regeneration).

WORDS: MARK SERRELS

# BLURRING THE LINES...

## Haze

- noun

1. an aggregation in the atmosphere of very fine, widely dispersed, solid or liquid particles, or both, giving the air an opalescent appearance that subdues colours
2. vagueness or obscurity, as of the mind or perception; confused or vague thoughts, feelings, etc. "The victims were still in a haze and couldn't describe the accident."

When gaming is under fire from all angles, from the media, from politicians, from parents – how do we defend it? How do we convince these people that videogames don't desensitise all of us to violence; that virtual experiences of killing, murder, and death don't translate to real world experiences. That we're not all mindless killing machines trained up by thousands upon thousands of brutal, bloody deathmatches.

It's almost impossible...

Think about how long you have been gaming. During that time how many people have you virtually slaughtered?

How many soldiers have you shot down in cold blood? During that time, have you ever felt even the slightest shred of remorse? We're guessing the answer is a resounding no.

With *Haze*, however, that is all set to change. You see, as gamers, we are not used to ruminating upon the consequences of our actions, and beyond some insignificant

gimmicks, we are not used to choosing between right and wrong. Up until now games have encouraged us to blast first and ask absolutely no questions later. *Haze* is different. *Haze* gives you that choice; *Haze* encourages you to ask those questions, and ultimately find your own answer.

### The Tale of the Tape

Here is the situation: the year is 2048; the UN and NATO no longer protect the world, and selected areas have collapsed into a state of anarchy. War has become a business and 'Mantel', as one of the largest corporate entities in the business world, is now responsible for the protection of the western world.

You play as Sergeant Shane Carpenter, a soldier completely loyal to Mantel, committed to protecting the interests of his company in its many conquests throughout the world. After being rescued from a life of petty crime and trained into an elite killing machine by Mantel, Carpenter is an unquestioning assassin. During the events of *Haze*, however, Carpenter begins to question

his reality, and the lines between duty, and what is morally correct, slowly begin to blur...

Developed by Free Radical, the team behind the *TimeSplitters* series, *Haze* is an attempt to take the frenetic gameplay seen in the FPS genre and add a moral dimension, which could very well transform the game from simple entertainment into a commentary on the act of videogame violence itself. By Free Radical's own description: all other games compare to a mindless *Missing in Action* murder-fest; whereas *Haze* is an attempt to create an *Apocalypse Now*: a sophisticated discussion of war and how it affects the participants. A look at how the chaos of war completely dissolves all notions of morality.

But vague ponderings upon the nature of conflict aside, in its current state, from a pure gameplay perspective, *Haze* already looks set to 'nade' its FPS competition into oblivion. We haven't seen many games that can even compete

■ "Take that invisible man! Oh... he's gone... OR IS HE?!" (continues shooting)



■ Really, does anyone know what the hell this thing is? Cause we totally have no idea. Makes it kind of difficult to write a caption...

## VEHICULAR HOMICIDE

As with most FPS games nowadays, vehicles look set to play a huge role in *Haze*, especially so considering the announcement of four player co-op in the title. The vehicles are set to range from smaller two man vehicles, straight through to four man monstrosities. Again, however, Free Radical has pulled a move that will make the competition weep in envy. How? Well, let's put it this way, we had a good long look at how these vehicles handled and the ultra-realistic physics and sweet damage models reminded us of *MotorStorm*. Yep, that's right, an FPS where the vehicles and vehicle handling are up there with the cream of the crop in the driving genre.

with the graphical might of this title, and when you consider the expertise and experience of the developers responsible, we could be looking at a game that renders all other FPS titles dead on arrival.

Oh, and did we forget to mention the 4-player co-op?

### Super Best Friends

Yes, kindly pick yourself off the floor and clean up those pants because *Haze* is set to crank co-op gaming up a notch by providing a campaign multiplayer experience that renders all others obsolete. With online you can join three of your friends in the single-player game, with options that allow your amigos to jump in and out at any point of the game.

And all aspects of the game design are focused upon delivering the best co-op experience possible. Almost all vehicles in the game can carry your entire group allowing you to go all A-Team on the bad guys. This is a game that takes co-op gaming into the next frontier with gusto. With split-screen available from home, and four-player online, *Haze* promises to deliver what could possibly be the greatest co-op experience seen in gaming thus far.

*Haze*'s online multiplayer is also set to be mindblowing. Free Radical has promised 24 player deathmatches, and considering the huge range of features seen in the *TimeSplitters* series we are convinced that *Haze* will have a close to infinite amount of options available to tweak. But yet again *Haze*'s developers are determined to rise above the slew of

first-person shooters and innovate in every way possible...

*Haze* will also feature a multiplayer team mode that actually takes you through a mini-storyline that relates to, and is consistent with, the plot in the main campaign. So basically, instead of mindlessly blasting your way through short 10-minute matches, these allow you to take part in a brief narrative where each player plays a particular role specific to a short story.

We also had the chance to see some standard deathmatch multiplayer in action, and suffice to say that the high standards of presentation we saw in single-player are perfectly preserved for multiplayer. Even at this early stage in development every texture is stunning, and the in-game physics are realistic and rewarding. At one point we saw a player blow up one of the larger vehicles in the game, which caused the hulking beast to do a breathtaking backwards somersault before landing squarely on its wheels. The way in which the vehicle moved and reacted to the environment was so accurate that everyone in attendance did a complete double take.

### The Nectar of Life

Despite the fact that *Haze* innovates in

**"HAZE IS AN APOCALYPSE NOW: A SOPHISTICATED DISCUSSION OF WAR AND HOW IT AFFECTS THE PARTICIPANTS. A LOOK AT HOW THE CHAOS OF WAR COMPLETELY DIS-SOLVES ALL NOTIONS OF MORALITY."**

■ "Oh my god, those men are on fire." "Lets save them by blowing them to smithereens."

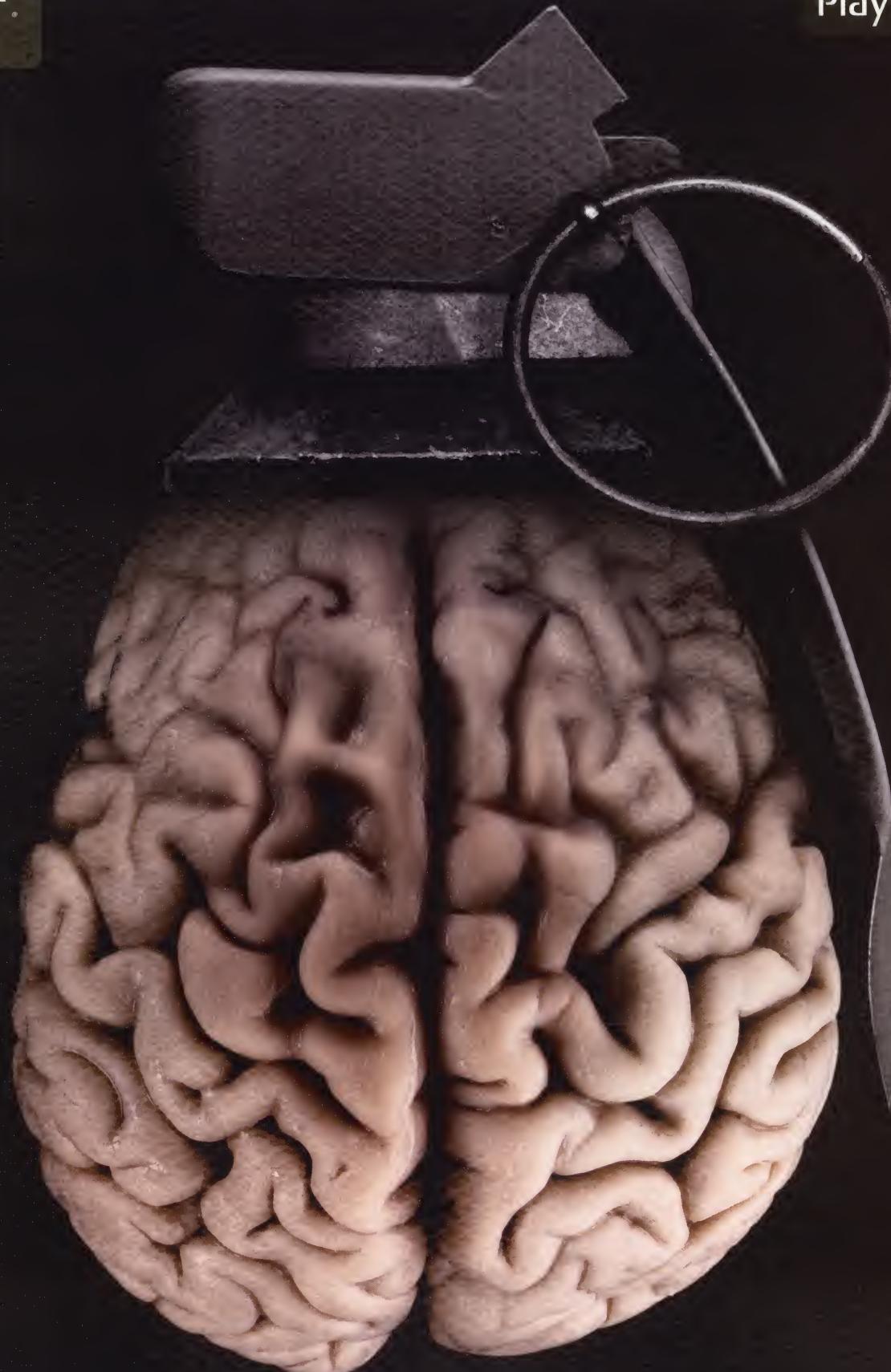
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■ "Bob, stop hugging that damn corpse!"

"It's cool man, he's 'armless!"

almost all aspects of gameplay, Free Radical is most proud of how a new feature, known as 'Nectar', has been integrated into the gaming experience. A substance developed by Mantel to help their soldiers in the field of battle, Nectar powers up the player in a number of ways, turning gamers into super soldiers with heightened senses, pre-cognitive abilities and super strength.

The Nectar substance is imbedded into your high tech suit, and when it becomes enabled there is an immediate change in perception. Utilising some slick graphical effects all enemies are immediately drawn into your view, highlighted by a unique 'haze' that shimmers around your foes. In the camouflaged environments, such as the jungle, or darkness, this feature becomes essential, helping players to track down hidden enemies before ruthlessly executing them.

In addition to the increased perceptive ability, Nectar also increases the strength of Sergeant Carpenter to the extent that his melee attacks send enemies flying across the screen. Brutal, unwieldy, but kind of hilarious, Nectar really succeeds in cranking the melee attack up a notch, transforming it into something completely spectacular and terrifying.

And amazingly pre-cognitive abilities are also a side effect of Nectar's use. Before an enemy fires, for example, there is an indicator from the source of the attack, a ripple that indicates where that danger originates from, giving players a window of opportunity to stop that attack before it happens, or avoid it.

Nectar also takes your shooting skills to new heights, increasing the auto aim to almost 100% accuracy, under its influence, you will automatically begin shooting as soon as an enemy is in your

sights, and will almost never miss.

There is however, a drawback to using this mysterious substance...

Overdose on Nectar and there are some negative side affects. Players jacked up on Nectar will eventually fail to distinguish between their teammates and enemies, shooting sporadically at anything that moves, causing the whole situation to transform into one enormous disaster area where no-one can discriminate between friend or foe. Ironically, a drug initially designed to focus your mind, eventually causes the player to dissolve into a temporary madness.

This idea of disorientation, the scrambling of friend and foe, right and wrong, is the major theme of *Haze*, infecting every aspect of the game. And without saying too much, there will be some plot twists that turn the entire story on its head, forcing you to question your own actions within the game. Remarkably, it's all seen through the heads-up display of Sgt. Carpenter, with no distractions from contrived cut-scenes, or any loading screens whatsoever. It's the perfect example of videogame storytelling at its best.

With the slew of first-person shooters on the scene we often have to ask ourselves the question: how does this game distinguish itself in a crowded market? With *Haze*, however, the answer is obvious. This is a game that sets out to reimagine and redesign every aspect of its genre, and from what we've seen so far Free Radical has been successful. Without question *Haze* is a game that oozes intelligence and excellence from every pore, and we can't wait to see the final results. ▀



## REALITY BITES

Throughout the game, *Haze* attempts to mess with absolutely everything. Your expectations regarding what to expect from the generic first-person shooter are deliberately and systematically subverted. At the beginning of the game, for example, enemies will die quickly and silently, but as your perception is slowly skewed (or perhaps dragged back to reality...) by Nectar and other influences, enemies will die more violently, with more screams, as the consequences of your actions become more explicit. Slowly but surely you begin to develop a guilty conscience regarding your actions, and the haze of what is right and wrong moves slightly out of focus...

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Rockstar's beast finally makes it to the PS3. Is the game showing its age, or

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■ "He's just soooo dreamy..." (SNORE...)





WORDS: MARK SERRELS

# How to Get Your Girlfriend Gaming

**G**irlfriends: they can be awesome. Making sandwiches, looking 'hawt', doing 'stuff' – yep, your missus can do all that good stuff and more, but when it comes to gaming there's a blind spot in the brain of 'planet woman'. Sure there are a select few who have dared to go where no girl has gone before, joining their man for a quick game to humour you, but for the most part we're suspecting that when it comes to gaming your girlfriend is wagging that finger, ripping the PlayStation out of the wall in a premenstrual rage, just so she can watch *Desperate Housewives*, or worse, *Grey's Anatomy* (shudder...).

But relax... OPS is here to rescue you. No longer will you have to suffer, waiting patiently for Eva Longoria's five pitiful minutes of screen time, wishing you could punch Dr 'McDreamy' until his face is a crimson mass of pulped flesh. We're here to help convert your missus into a gaming machine. Dr Phil is our bitch: follow our advice and reap the benefits...

Photography by: Matt Lowden



1

■ Domestic abuse, there's no excuse: except when your missus won't play games (maybe we shouldn't go there...)

2



3



■ The lengths we go to in the call of duty (tear)

## 1 Ease in Gently...

First off, stop what you're doing and think. Picking up a SIXAXIS, and shouting "think fast" before launching the controller at your better half is not going to work. Neither is chucking *Metal Gear Solid 3* in your PS2 and asking your girlfriend to memorise the complicated controls, while you watch over her with a clenched iron fist. As with all undertakings of this magnitude, you need a plan...

But before you do anything, ask yourself how well you know your girlfriend. Think objectively about what games she might enjoy playing. Despite what you may think, not all members of the fairer sex are going to love *Barbie Horse Adventure*. Some might actually want to bust out some *Resistance* multiplayer, or duke it out on *Tekken* – you just don't know. Our advice, however, is tread carefully.

In general girls tend not to like overly violent or overly complicated games, especially if they are new to gaming. The first title you introduce is key: your missus needs time to get used to the controller in a forgiving environment that is both stimulating and geared towards her needs. In other words your girlfriend isn't likely to jump headfirst into *Ultimate Mortal Kombat* and start busting out fatalities the first time she plays. Try something a little more slow paced, and easy going, like *The Sims*. Something that will allow her to work through the mistakes she will inevitably make.

## 2 The Secret Weapon...

But, you know, some girls, despite how easy and tailored to their needs a game is, will still baulk at the idea of gaming. The traditional controller, with its dual analogue set up and prodigious range of buttons can be a bit intimidating. But never fear, help is at hand, quite literally, in the form of your ultimate secret weapon: the game peripheral.

Yep, one of the main reasons that the PS2 continues to outsell its rivals is its slow move from hardcore games machine to party starter. It always seemed strange that despite the fact almost everyone we know owns a PS2, those little buggers continue to sell. Why? Because people who normally wouldn't touch games with 40 foot barge pole, are interested in the kind of interactive entertainment you don't need a control pad for...

Games like *Guitar Hero*, *Buzz!* and *SingStar*, with their range of peripherals, are perfect for gently introducing your girlfriend to the world of gaming. For starters we recommend you splash out on the *SingStar* microphones, set the difficulty to 'easy', then let the game do all the work for you. All girls like to think they can blast out a note or two, and having some videogame tell them they are a 'rising star', 'lead singer' or even better, a 'SingStar', will only increase your missus' attachment to your console of choice. Better yet, once you've 'eased in' with the mics you can be more brazen about plunking a proper controller in her dainty hands without getting kneed in the balls. Congratulations: you have broken the barrier between woman and control pad.

## 3 Removing Obstacles...

All right troopers – give yourself a firm, manly pat on the back, the first major step is over, but the journey has just begun and there are difficult times ahead. Now that your little chick-a-dee is a bit more confident about plugging in the console it is your sworn duty to encourage this kind of behaviour. We cannot stress this enough – never, and we mean never, take the piss out of your girlfriend regarding her attempts to play. No matter how crap her skills are she must believe that she is the games master. This is a sensitive time, you need to reinforce her constantly, tell her how good she is. Sacrifice your ego by telling her that she is even better than you. Chicks totally dig that...

Okay. So listen up fellas, this is the difficult part. During the early stages of her conversion, your girlfriend will most likely prefer to do anything rather than play games. That includes things like watching TV, reading, or possibly even doing housework. Yep, it may sound sexist, but girls are, in general, a bit more responsible than us sweatshirts. It's hard to believe, but some girls actually put cleanliness and hygiene before gaming (gasp!) so it is your duty to help her through this difficult time; meaning you must push past all your natural, manly instincts and do some cleaning. We know, it feels so wrong, but if you help remove all the distractions she might be more inclined to spend that time gaming. In addition you can earn some brownie points for doing some extra work around the house. Booya!

■ "But you said it was a good size..."

4



### To Win or not to Win...

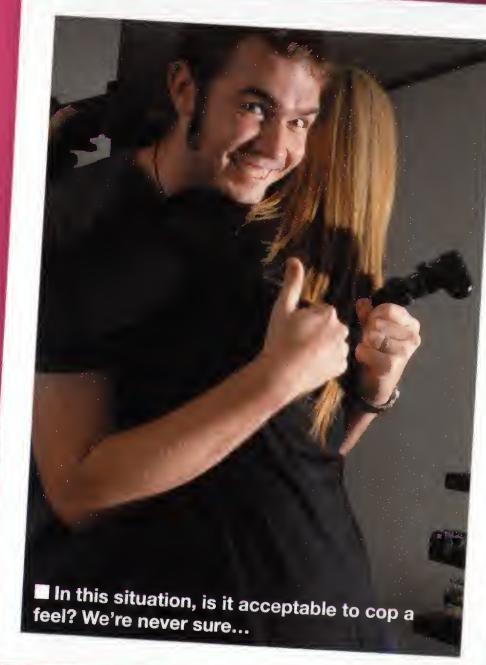
...that is the question. Now there are plenty of girls out there who are highly skilled to the extent that you won't have a choice in the matter, but if your missus is a novice, this is a tricky question. Win too convincingly, too consistently, then your girlfriend will no doubt lose interest very quickly. If you let her win too obviously, then she'll resent you for patronising her. Our recommendation is to create the illusion of progress... let her feel like she is slowly improving to the extent that she can eventually compete on an even footing with you. Just be aware that, at some point, you won't have to fake it anymore...

## 4 The Consequences...

So now you've got your gorgeous spouse playing games. Now you've got your senorita to the stage where she will independently seek pleasure from the awesome world of videogaming, and possibly partake in titles that you never thought possible. Now is a good time to kick back, reflect on your success, and give yourself a well deserved break. But sooner or later you will find your soul struggling with this single question: was it worth all the effort?

Now your girlfriend bogsarts the PlayStation, she may deal you the sort of ego crushing defeats that cause you to recoil in horror, as she gets all up in your face trash-talking about how you 'just got served'. Is this what you envisioned? Your girlfriend slowly encroaching on your game-space, chopping your balls off with defeat after defeat in *Soul Calibur III*? You may laugh now at the absurdity of it all, but it's a stark possibility, and one you must consider before an undertaking of this magnitude. These are questions that must be considered.

But despite our completely ignorant views about girl gamers, we thoroughly recommend the joys of playing videogames with your better half. And the fact of the matter is more girls are gravitating to videogames every day; developers are making huge strides towards creating the sort of gaming experiences that females are interested in. There is a stark possibility it's something she is already interested in. Go on give it a go, we promise you won't regret it... that much...



■ In this situation, is it acceptable to cop a feel? We're never sure...

### Some Warnings...

- If you try to get your girlfriend into something she's never been particularly interested in and succeed, she may feel inclined to do the same to you. Don't be surprised if she wants to show you the joys of netball. Or *Ugly Betty*. At this point you need to do what all men do – suck it up and smile.
- Assume nothing. The fact of the matter is it's 2007 and, unless she's Amish (or 70), she'll have played a videogame or two in her time. Consider that before you address her like a puppy you're training how to sit. Chicks hate that.
- Not all women are the same. If they were, we would've figured them out long ago. As such, light and fun games may not always be the answer. Some girls like lion cubs, bright colours and Belinda Carlisle. Some girls like aliens, zombies and alien zombies. Take note.
- With *BUZZ!*, go easy. We all know that women and general knowledge go together like Britney Spears and hair clippers, so play dumb – let her win a couple of rounds, or lose her forever.

# KILLZONE

We got this idea from an email we got a while ago called "Where the f--k is *Killzone*?" We didn't print it because the letter was full of so many expletives we would've bored a hole through our dash key replacing all the filthy swears. That, and we were feeling a little spiteful anyway (it was a Friday and the pub was out of schnitzel). It did get us thinking though. Where is *Killzone*? And what happened to that Rockstar western? The answers (and a few cryptic *non*-answers) are right here.

## KILLING DAY

Last Seen: E3, May 2005  
The lowdown

Killing Day, a first-person shooter from Ubisoft, was overshadowed by the likes of Killzone and MotorStorm video form at E3 2005 but it still looked good. It featured some dual-fisted shooty action with the (probably French) protagonist ventilating a load of scumbags and generally making a mess of the fine-looking scenery. **Where is it now?** Cancelled. Killing Day was quietly shuffled out the back door and beaten to death with a sock full of quarters. It's no longer part of the Ubisoft portfolio.



## 3 DAYS TO VEGAS

Last Seen: March 2007  
The lowdown

Screenshots from this game surfaced in April 2005. For two years nothing happened, but at this year's Game Developers Conference some new info was revealed. It features major cities and countryside from across the USA (between New York and Las Vegas), Blu-ray has made fitting all this detail on a disc a lot easier and developer Steel Monkeys is refusing to seek out a publisher until it's finished. **Where is it now?**



## THAT ROCKSTAR WESTERN

Last Seen: E3, May 2005  
The lowdown

Revealed in the first batch of PS3 movies was a western from Rockstar. The company has been extremely secretive about the project since then with nary a scrap of info made available since it was unveiled. We don't even know what it's called - "Old West Project" is still as much as anyone knows. Speculation continues that the game is, in fact, the sequel to Red Dead Revolver but we're not really buying that. Two years of like Activision's GUN, only... next gen-ier. **Where is it now?**

Good question.

## THE GETAWAY

Last Seen: E3, May 2006  
The lowdown

After a brief tech demo of a photo-realistic Piccadilly Circus at E3 2005, *The Getaway* went underground for a year, resurfacing as an even briefer teaser during a show reel at E3 2006. Then it went AWOL again.

**Where is it now?**

It's still kicking. We may even see something at E3 2007.



## EIGHT DAYS

Last Seen: E3, May 2006  
The lowdown

*Eight Days*, a pretty spectacular-looking cinematic action-adventure, showed its hand at E3 2006 and turned more than its fair share of heads. Whether the footage was in-game or rendered to spec with a HUD on it remains to be seen, but from the looks of the trailer *Eight Days* is (was?) an action-fest punctuated by some gnarly set-pieces. **Where is it now?**

If YOU know, give us a shout. Nobody is saying nuthin'.



## EYEDENTIFY

Last Seen: E3, May 2005  
The lowdown

Eyedentify is (was?) some sort of interactive EyeToy (now dubbed the for PS3. We've seen about 30 seconds of this game in two years. Since then, we haven't heard a peep, from Sony or from people hanging out for it. We thought it might have rated a mention when the PlayStation Eye was announced, but nothing was said. **Where is it now?**

We're not positive, but the future isn't looking that bright.



## AFRIKA

Last Seen: E3, May 2006

The lowdown  
Afrika, a working title, is one of the oddest upcoming PS3 titles out there. Ever so briefly displayed in a promo video during the Sony press conference at E3 2006, the game has been missing-in-action ever since. It's being developed by Rhino Studios and published by Sony. It's got animals in it. African animals. That's all anybody knows.

Where is it now?  
Not a clue. We tried to find out. We really did.



## UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

Last Seen: May 2007

The lowdown  
A part Indiana Jones, part Tomb Raider; part Die Hard, action-adventure from Naughty Dog, Uncharted looks hot. Uncharted is proving to be harder for us to get a look at than US media was recently treated to a recent build, but

Where is it now?  
Still currently in development, Uncharted is due to ship this year provided there aren't any delays. Which there usually are.



## L.A. NOIRE

Last Seen: September 2006

The lowdown  
Australian developer Team Bondi, founded by Brendan McNamara - writer/director of *The Getaway*, revealed its first title back in July 2005. *L.A. Noire* is a film-noir style detective story set in '40s post-war Los Angeles. In September the title but the game then announced it would have been published in Ultimo. So

Where is it now?  
Still under development, but we doubt it'll be out this year. Also, Team Bondi? Yeah, not in Bondi at all. It's in Ultimo. So we don't know what to believe anymore.



## POSSESSION

Last Seen: May 2005

The lowdown  
Announced way back in April 2004 and last seen May 2005, *Possession* was a real-time strategy game that put you in control of an army of bloodthirsty zombies, with the ability to assume control over any particular one at any time.

Where is it now?  
It's not sounding too good. It's not overdue (it was slated to release in 2007 from the beginning) but it hasn't been seen since, and Volatile Games has had no luck in finding a publisher.



## KILLZONE

Last Seen: E3, May 2005

The lowdown

Ever since the too-good-to-be-true trailer fired up gamers worldwide *Killzone* has been absent from every event since, missing E3 2006 and the 2006 Tokyo Game Show. Sony hasn't even mentioned it. It's only recently the silence was broken. Dutch newspaper *de Volksrant* printed some tasty nuggets and at his pre-Game Developer Conference presentation, SCE President of Worldwide Studios Phil Harrison unveiled some brief B-roll footage from the game before declaring it'll be shown at E3 this year.

Where is it now?

Still hidden in the Netherlands, but it's coming. Expect something big at this year's E3.



## ENDLESS SAGA

Last Seen: July 2005

The lowdown  
Endless Saga was an MMORPG (a geek acronym for massively multiplayer online rocket-propelled grenades, we think) revealed at the 2005 PlayStation Meeting in Japan, designed by Korean developer and publisher Webzen.

Where is it now?  
Endless Saga's saga ended, well, around a year ago now. Webzen announced in July 2006 that the project was cancelled that we didn't mention this earlier. Todd, when you've done crying - cross this sucker off your calendar.





WORDS: Anthony O'Connor

# MAKING MOUNTAINS

Get ready to change the face of the battlefield forever in this dystopian look at future war where you can make the earth move – literally. And no landscape will be the same as you left it

**G**lobal Warming. It's a contentious topic to say the least. Mostly in America, which, funny enough, produces a good portion of the world's greenhouse emissions. You have one side – usually right-wing, redneck, tobacco chewin', George "Dubya" Bush lovin', banjo-strummin', wood whittlin' Republicans claiming it's a crock of shit. Then there's the left-wing, tree huggin', dope smokin', Hippie-music-listenin', patchouli oil-stinkin', skirt-wearing Liberals howling like banshees that the end is nigh.

## Wood whittlin'?

Okay, that was some massive generalisation spouting right there; but the sheer volume of media devoted to this issue has almost made it a joke. The argument seems to go

something like this: Those who don't believe global warming's a threat say – "we don't know enough about this planet to know if this just isn't a natural cycle" and those who do believe global warming's a threat say: "Yes we do. And a few hundred thousand scientists will back us up."

It's become a comedy of errors with political pundits seizing the issue and beating it like several dead horses.

## But what if it's real?

Imagine if Al Gore – former president hopeful and now doom-sayer of the dangers of global warming – with his Academy Award winning doco *An Inconvenient Truth* – was right.

What if global warming did occur and we found ourselves arse backwards in an environmental sense. Deserts would become seas,

seas deserts and cities waterlogged epitaphs to a society that liked to drive big, fat SUVs in the city. Players of LucasArts' next "big thing" *Fracture* won't have to imagine it, as that's the backdrop for the game. Timely and pretty cool. But there's more...

## First a little history of the future

Earth copped a pasting around the mid 2100s. Global warming had caused massive, worldwide ecological, seismological anarchy, chaos and destruction. As a result of the polar ice caps melting like a giant Paddle Pop left in the sun, the United States was split in two by the "Great Flood". A disaster that literally changed the face of the planet. The grand old Mississippi River swallowed the central portion of the U.S. like a greedy stoner. The two

halves were left to fend for themselves. And we've all seen how well America deals with stuff after natural disasters (Hurricane Katrina, anyone?).

The East, now called The Atlantic Alliance – symbolic of their union with Europe, puts its faith in technology. More specifically cybernetics, an established yet evolving science now more than 150 years old.

On the other side of the great big watery mass that used to be, you know, land – the Western States sit. Now named the Republic of Pacifica (we'll just call them Westies) and allied with Asia, these cats solve their problems at a genetic level. They're restructuring their own DNA, augmenting their humanity, a method the Atlantic Alliance finds morally reprehensible.

And you know when Americans



■ "Base, do you copy? My gun seems to be jammed"  
CLICK, BOOM "Whoops..."



■ Big men. Big guns. Big... elbow pads...

### THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

During the Q&A portion of Day 1, someone asked "why third-person?" It was a good question, as other than the fact it was third-person game it seemed the kind of title that is normally an FPS. The answer was simple – perspective. It's much more awe-inspiring when you make a mountain that's a size you can see in relation to you. Otherwise it could appear to be a mild incline with all the grandeur of Rooty Hill.

find something morally reprehensible – chances are they're going to bomb the shite out of it.

### Cue: the year 2161 – NOW

In 2161 the Atlantic Alliance gets a mere hint, a whiff, that the Westies are getting militarily prepped (probably with "weapons of mass destruction") and the newly restored President – could be George X Bush for all we know – orders a strike in the now bone dry San Francisco Bay. This predictably enough leads to an all out war. Fought on American soil but with global implications. Its civil war in the future, but this time slavery is replaced with the moral implications of genetic tinkering – and the question of how altered you can be before you are human no more. Plus the musket has been replaced with terrain deformation.

### Terrain Wha-?

We'll get to that in a second. First some facts. You are Mason Briggs, a soldier for the Atlantic Alliance. You've heard stories about your new enemy. How they've altered themselves. Some of them can jump hundreds of metres, others are hugely strong. Hell, they don't even look human anymore. And that's how you'll have to think of them,

as you're going to have to off more than a few of them. Now, as advantageous as the ability to hop around like Spider-Man is, Mason and his fellow Easties have a few tricks up their sleeves too.

### Dammit, man, TELL US!

Okay, we'll stop pretending we're in the future now and dish the goods. First up the demonstration by one of the game's makers – shown on the big screen at the LucasArts theatre. It starts off looking, well, a little generic. Your character Mason Briggs looks like the same grizzled space marine/soldier/hard bastard you play in, hell, almost every FPS or third-person shooter these days. In this case the perspective is third-person, and we'll get to the reason for that later. Anyway Briggs is approaching a rather large number of foes. We all lean back in our seats waiting for the inevitable: Briggs will chuck a grenade, snipe a couple of them, maybe run-and-gun a bit and we'll all shrug and compliment the pretty graphics.

Wrong. Briggs does indeed chuck a grenade but rather than reducing the hostiles to meaty chunks it creates a vortex in the ground. A mini-tornado if you will, that sucks enemies, rocks, trees and vehicles down – spitting some out

and burying others.

Briggs walks on for a bit. He's vastly outnumbered by a group of Westies (like being on a train to Penrith but slightly less scary) and they have the higher ground. There's far too many of them for the vortex grenade so Mason lobs something else... and suddenly the ground in front of him rises. He chuck another and another and the ground rises two times more until Mason is atop a veritable mountain. Now he has the higher ground and cover to boot.

But the Westies aren't impressed. They start shooting at Mason's DIY mountain. Bits of cover are chipping away. So Mason shoots down a few grenades. Suddenly the ground beneath the Westies sinks, they fly about and struggle to get to their feet. Mason takes advantage of the moment and blasts them with his gun. There are still a few hostiles moving about and they're leaping and jumping like man-monkeys. Mason does something (which at this stage has not been animated, so we just had to imagine something cool) and a nice round boulder appears. It rolls down the hill and squashes the remaining Westies.

Briggs chuck a few grenades that lower his mountain and keeps on trucking.

### Fracture: the next day

We had two days at LucasArts and after the impressive, but not exactly earth shattering (geddit?) demonstration from the day before we wanted the developer, Day 1 Studios, to tell us why *Fracture* is going to rock as hard as it believes – and they really do. After all, LucasArts picked their project up. That's like Jessica Alba buying you a drink and asking you what you want for breakfast.

In the more intimate environment of the *Fracture* offices we got to see some terrain deformation for things other than killing. In fact there are four main reasons for this ability: cover – to protect yourself and allies, tactical – to put yourself in the best position for combat, destruction – for actual combat and puzzle solving.

#### Puzzle solving?

Yes indeed, for at certain points in the game you will be faced with buildings. One particular fortress looked pretty much impenetrable. There was a catwalk way, way up at the top of the building and a door that was caved in at the bottom. We were quickly schooled on two of the multiple methods of entry.

#### The low road

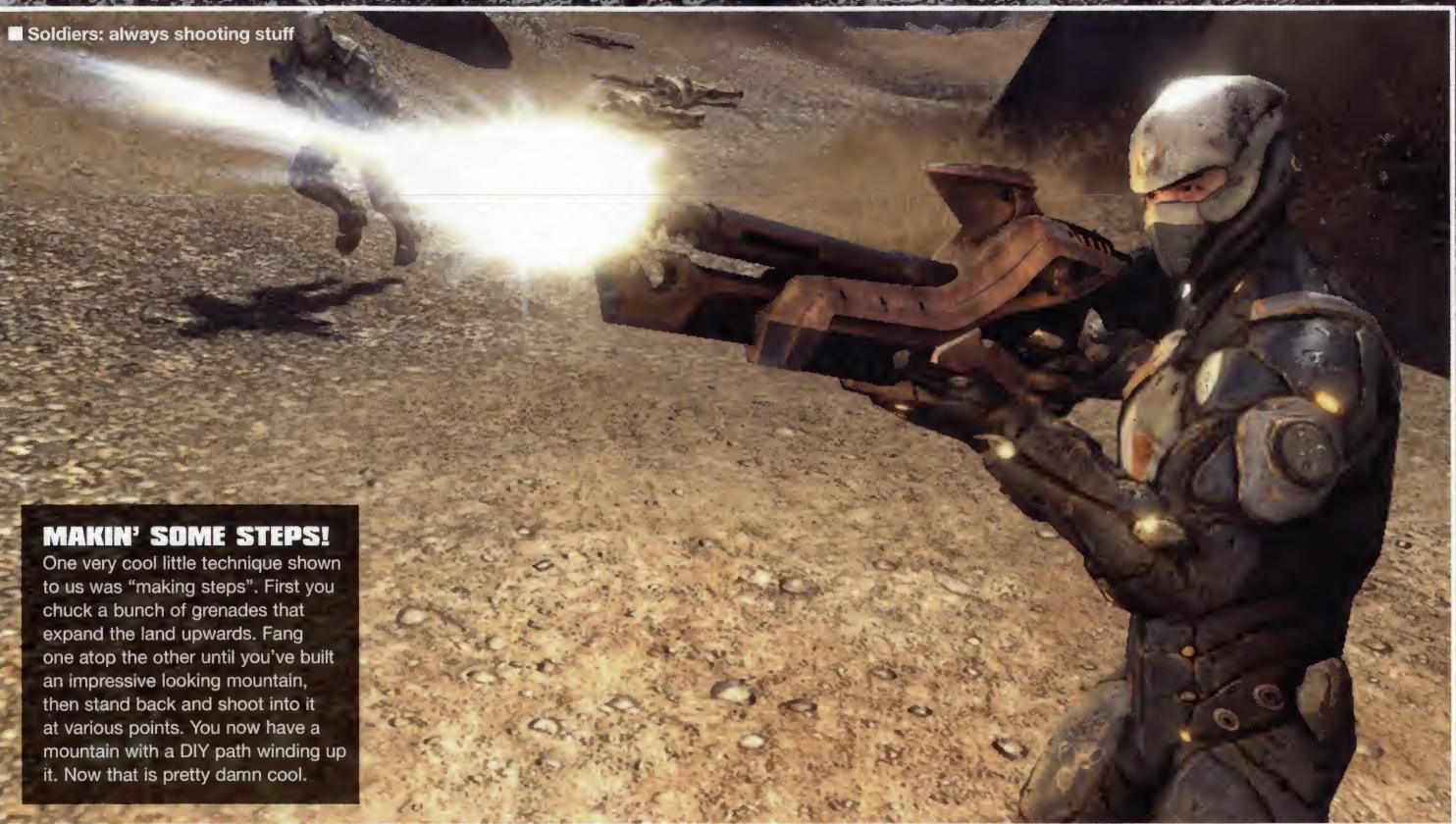
Using the subsonic grenades Briggs



■ The soldiers liked to spice up warfare with a bit of line dancing every now and then



■ "Why didn't that stupid barber finish my buzzcut?"



turned the cave-in into a usable tunnel. He then lobbed a few boulders down the newly formed corridor squishing any Westies that might be ready to fight. Or ask you for cigarettes.

### The high road

Mason chucked a grenade on the ground. Time to run away, right? Wrong. This is a spike grenade and as the ground started turning red the earth suddenly spouted a huge, and rather phallic, vertical appendage – lifting you to the catwalk's height. The guy playing Briggs asked us if we'd like to see something cool. Hell yeah, we would. So Briggs infiltrated the fortress and came across a cannon that had been causing us no end of grief when we were outside. The problem was it was protected by a shield. But if you carefully put a spike grenade underneath it... suddenly the plasma blasting machine rises up on the spike and is crushed against the very force

field made to protect it. Nothing like a bit of ironic destruction to put a smile on your dial.

### Other information – mostly classified

Getting more information on this game proved to be like pulling teeth. From a polar bear. That was awake. Okay, that's stretching it – but it appears LucasArts wants there to be plenty of surprises. It kind of went like this.

OPS: "Will there be any other types of grenades and terrain deformation."

LA (LucasArts): "Yes."

OPS: "Can you tell us about them?"

LA: "No."

OPS: "Will there be varied landscapes and different types of terrain?"

LA: "Yes."

OPS: "Can you tell us about it?"

LA: "No."

We'll spare you the rest. It's actually fair enough, really.

after all the game's not due until 2008 and you don't want to give away the really cool stuff before then. We were promised some things, though. For example: Mason Briggs will not be a voiceless, generic marine. He will emote, change as a character and has a special interest in this battle... a mysterious special interest that we weren't allowed to know about – but it exists. Apparently.

There will be fights against stronger foes, but we're unsure if big boss battles occur. The game will not be a gory one – as we found out after seeing if we could deform our enemies and make them burst like meat piñatas by chucking tectonic grenades at them. You can't.

Also it's not a run-and-gun, destroy-the-generator-at-the-end blast fest. As the game progresses Mason Briggs will evolve both physically and emotionally and the mysterious Westies will make you ask 'what is human,

where do we start, where do we end?' In an awesome *Blade Runner*, *Matrix*-ey kind of way

### Put a bow on this puppy

So far *Fracture* looks impressive. Not awesome, not smack-you-in-the-chops brilliant but very solid with some truly intriguing ideas. Starting off with such a firm foundation it's hard to imagine *Fracture* not being the goods when it finally arrives. The fact that you can literally change the battlefield to suit your needs is very intriguing, but whether that ends up being just a gimmick or the real meat of game remains to be seen. LucasArts doesn't release many games and it certainly doesn't release many games that have nothing whatsoever to do with the *Star Wars* universe. So we'll keep an ear to the ground for this one and update you as often as we can. Hopefully we'll soon be able to turn our cautious optimism into rabid excitement. ■

# ONLINE

The latest PS3 Network news, online reviews, Gamer of the Month and more!

## WHAT'S NEW?

The latest PlayStation Store goodies

### Accessing overseas PlayStation Stores

It's important to know that you don't have to get by with just the downloads on the Australian PS Store. You can setup overseas profiles on your PS3 and simply sign in as them to access the extra content available on the US and Hong Kong stores. To do this simply set up a new profile and enter an American or Hong Kong address. This way when you access the store using this profile you will be taken to the overseas stores. What's also cool is that once you start a download from an overseas store, you can switch back to your main Australian profile and start playing a game and it will continue to download the content you started with a different profile.



### Australian Store

For our local store we've got the arcade classic Q\*bert (full game) and new PS3 games like Go! Sudoku and f!ow. There are also trailers of GTAIV (you need to see this), the upcoming flight-sim Warhawk and the Rocky Blu-ray release.



### USA Store

Two old school arcade games in the form of Rampage and Rampart are among the newest releases. The Calling All Cars and Super Rub-a-Dub PS3 games are also available. What you're much more likely to be interested in though are the Ninja Gaiden Sigma demo and the Burnout Paradise trailer.

### Hong Kong Store

The HK store's the least interesting of the three this month, with nothing much besides a few new movie trailers, including The Reaping, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix and Ocean's 13. The Ninja Gaiden Sigma demo is also available here though.

## LATEST FIRMWARE = 1.80

To make the most out of your PS3 you'll need the latest firmware. Here's a look at what firmware version 1.70 and the more recent 1.80 offers PS3 users.

**1080p upscaling** – Version 1.80 features upscaling of PlayStation games, PlayStation 2 games and DVD movies up to full 1080p HD resolution when viewed on a compatible HDTV.

**Photo printing** – Version 1.80 includes the ability to print photo images stored on PS3's hard disk drive or inserted storage media to a selection of Epson printers via USB connection.

**Background downloading** – Version 1.60 delivers a far more convenient process for downloading content. Instead of staring at a download screen while you wait for stuff to download, up to six items from the PlayStation Store can be queued up and downloaded while you play games, browse the web or use the other media functions.

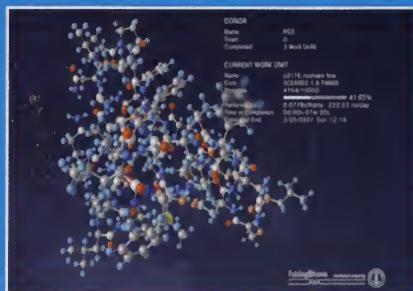
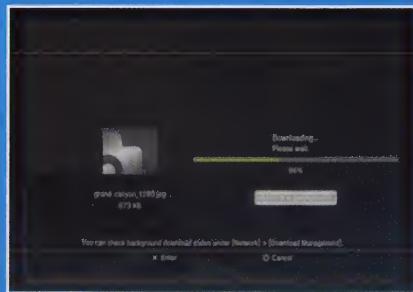
**Folding@home** – The Folding@home project allows PS3 users to connect a distributed computing project that uses the power of idle PS3s to research protein folding mechanisms in the hope that this will lead to medical treatments for related diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and many cancers.

**Remote Play** – This feature allows you to access photos, videos, and music on your PS3's hard drive from a nearby PSP.

**Backwards Compatibility** – Version 1.60 features the Backwards Compatibility software

for around 2,800 PSOne and PS2 titles.

- Ability to play downloaded PS1 games on PS3
- PS2 Dualshock now has 'rumble' features when used with the PS3
- Saves accrued whilst playing PS1 games on PS3 can be transferred to the PSP
- Bluetooth keyboard and mouse support
- Enhanced web browsing with improved zoom
- Tool to reduce flicker when the PS3 system is using interlaced video (480i or 1080i).



## HOW TO UPDATE

There are three ways of updating your PS3.

**1** **System Update:** If your PS3 is connected to the network you can easily update it via the PS3's 'System Update' feature.

**2** **PC:** If you're not able to do this you can update it using a PC. Download the update data and save it on some form of storage media and insert it into your PS3. Copy the update data across and perform the upgrade. Download the data from here: [http://au.playstation.com/support/ps3/faqs/ps3\\_FAQ\\_system\\_update\\_features.shtml](http://au.playstation.com/support/ps3/faqs/ps3_FAQ_system_update_features.shtml)

**3** **Games:** You can update using disc media, using the firmware that is included on a game disc. We've been informed that most games released post launch will feature the most recent updates available.

## FIRMWARE REQUESTS

### Wallpapers

– The PSP has wallpaper support. Why doesn't the PS3? It just doesn't make any sense.

### Access to the Cross-Media Bar in-game

– Having to quit out to message a friend or see what your buddies are playing is a real pain in the arse. Access to this info and improved messaging seems like a must to us.

### Backwards Compatibility

– Keep it coming. There are a few local games that aren't working yet. Also, Gran Turismo 4 doesn't work either. Somebody may want to get on that, you know, it's only one of the most popular PS2 games... we don't know, ever?

Any others ideas? Send them to [ops@derwenthoward.com.au](mailto:ops@derwenthoward.com.au) and we'll print them right here.

# Marvel: Ultimate Alliance

## Far from marvellous

■ Developer: RAVEN SOFTWARE ■ Publisher: ACTIVISION ■ Out: NOW ■ Players: 1-4

After enjoying the single-player *Marvel Ultimate Alliance* experience we were itching to take our juiced-up super heroes online for some side-by-side heroics. Unfortunately we came away from the experience bitterly disappointed and downright puzzled at the online decisions made by Activision.

After eagerly logging on we chose to join an online game. After a few seconds searching the dreaded "No games found" message flashed up on-screen and our spirits died a little. Not one person anywhere in the world was playing an online game of *Marvel Ultimate Alliance*.

Perhaps we'll have more luck hosting a game, we tried to tell ourselves. After waiting in a lobby we'd created for 15 minutes the boredom was unbearable and we had to quit out and give up.

*Marvel Ultimate Alliance*'s online mode makes no sense. It's not like most online modes where

the multiplayer part of the game is different to the main game. *Marvel*'s online mode is simply a co-operative version of the main single-player game where you play through the missions with a buddy online. Considering this is the case, why the hell are players forced to stare at a lobby screen while they wait for other players to join? Surely it makes far more sense to just have an option you can select on the main menu where you choose online and get to play through actual missions, while having the option of other people joining into your game and taking over CPU characters? We'll give it one point for the fact that it would be workable if you organised a set time with one of your *Marvel Ultimate Alliance*-owning buddies to start an online game together, but we're being generous. **NP**

★



# Call of Duty 3

## Enlisting now...

■ Developer: TREYARCH ■ Publisher: ACTIVISION ■ Out: NOW ■ Players: 1-24

The good news is that unlike Activision's *Marvel Ultimate Alliance*, there are actually people playing *COD3* online. Most times we logged on we were able to find 10-15 games running, involving a variety of capture the flag and deathmatch offerings.

As with many online games (except the superb *Resistance* and *MotorStorm*) the vast majority of players you will encounter are American. While this works as a bonus when you're shooting them, it's a definite bummer in terms of latency.

*COD3* handily offers a five star connection speed rating next to each of the lobbies. Unfortunately, while the Yanks are no doubt enjoy 4-5 star ratings, we're left to struggle along with 1-2 star ratings. Even when we stuck to the lobbies with two stars

we were only able to connect to a very small number of the available lobbies, and when we got through we found our laggy experience put us at a distinct disadvantage against the lag-free Yanks.

If you're happy to guard the door to the flag with a rocket launcher then we're sure you'll be able to play without the lag being a problem but if you're after any sort of intuitive warzone combat you'll be disappointed.

Logging on at the local peak times (weeknights from 4-7) will increase your chances of finding a speedy Aussie game but it really shouldn't be this much work to find a good online experience. **NP**

★★

## GAMER OF THE MONTH



Want to be simultaneously loved, worshipped and adored by your peers? Well now you can! We are planning to immortalise one lucky PS3 gamer from Australia or New Zealand on this page each month.

Want to be the OPS Gamer of the Month? Tell us why at [ops@derwenthoward.com.au](mailto:ops@derwenthoward.com.au) or meet us online. Only the bestest and most awesomest may apply...



## OPS READER SECTION

Online gaming on the PS3 is rolling along nicely now, even if *Resistance* and *MotorStorm* are crushing everything before them as the clear multiplayer games of choice. Online gaming isn't just about shooting and out-racing unknown opponents, although that can be great fun. It's also about meeting up with fellow PS3 fans... and then shooting the crap out of them. With that in mind we've provided details of a few of the OPS readers' online names and which game they like to play most. Say hi and challenge them to a game. Remember that online names are not case sensitive. If you'd like to share your online name with fellow readers email us at ops@derwenthoward.com.au with 'Online Challenge' as the subject heading and tell us your name and which game you want to play. We'll also be organising an OPS vs. readers online night soon, so practise up. In the meantime the OPS team's online names are printed on page 8 so feel free to add us and throw down a challenge.

Assasin\_Killer - Resistance  
Blackadder\_05 - Resistance  
Doxsic - MotorStorm  
Cam4v - Resistance  
Cosgrove - Resistance  
EBK - MotorStorm  
Jase619 - Resistance  
Malifcan - MotorStorm  
MrTerminator - Resistance  
Phoenixavenger - Resistance  
Shags666 - Resistance  
Stinkfire - Resistance  
SuperSmashBros - Resistance  
Vauto - Resistance



# Downloadable Gaming

A selection of the all-new bite-sized PS3 gaming on offer at the PlayStation Store



### Super Stardust HD

■ Developer: Housemarque ■ Players: 1-2  
■ Max Resolution: 1080p ■ Out: June/July

*Stardust* melds together classic arcade gameplay with modern polish. The frantic pace will literally leave you between a rock and a hard place as you pick your way through a sea of asteroids with dozens of enemies in tow. *Super Stardust HD* comes highly recommended. **4 NO ★★★★**



### Calling All Cars

■ Developer: Incognito Ent. ■ Players: 1-4  
■ Max Resolution: 1080p ■ Out: June/July

Crazy, crim catching chaos is the name of the game here. Each of four players control their own squad car, and you're all out to collar the crooks and steal all the glory for yourself. With split screen, online and solo modes, *Calling All Cars* is the party game you can play anytime. **4 NO ★★★★**

### flow

■ Developer: thatgamecompany ■ Players: 1  
■ Max Resolution: 1080p ■ Out: Now

A simple title in which you control stylized microorganisms as you float through the primordial soup in search of lesser creatures to consume. To call it a game would be a disservice – *flow* is the ultimate chillout experience. Don't expect a serious challenge and you'll love it. **4 NO ★★★★**



### Tekken Dark Resurrection

■ Developer: Bandai Namco ■ Players: 1-2  
■ Max Resolution: 1080p ■ Out: Now

This is the latest and greatest *Tekken* in glorious hi-def that includes the newcomers Lili and Dragunov, with Jinpachi Mishima playable for the first time. It's well worth the bargain price. **4 NO ★★★★**

### Super Rub-a-Dub

■ Developer: Sumo Digital ■ Players: 1  
■ Max Resolution: 1080p ■ Out: Now

Sony exec Phil Harrison's unofficial mascot the Rubber Ducky gets its own game! This puzzle game is another fine example of motion-sensing controls, with your controller movement translating precisely to the tilt of the 'tub. Worth the plunge if you like a challenge. **4 NO ★★★★**

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# JOIN THE STORM



YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT THE SKILLS? BATTLE YOUR MATES IN THE NEW SNOWSTORM ONLINE GAME IN HABBO. TEAM UP FOR THE ULTIMATE RUMBLE ALL DAY LONG AT [HABBO.COM.AU](http://habbo.com.au) WHERE ELSE?



THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

# REVIEWS



## WELCOME

What gives? I've missed out on *The Darkness* AND *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*? For what? *Aces of War*? Clearly I'm too nice for my own good.

Sure, there's some more gold elsewhere, mostly in the shape of the curvaceous Lara Croft and her pretty damn stellar *Tomb Raider: Anniversary*, but I think I need to be a bit more ruthless here. Sigh...

LUKE REILLY  
Reviews Editor

## REVIEW RATINGS

Here's what our review scores stand for:

- 10/10** Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 09/10** A truly astonishing game. Essential fare
- 08/10** Highly recommended
- 07/10** Good, solid fare that's well worth a look
- 06/10** Better than average, and acceptable for hardcore fans of the genre
- 05/10** An average game, probably not a lot to recommend here
- 04/10** Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 03/10** Extremely disappointing
- 02/10** To be avoided
- 01/10** Beer coaster

## THE OPS AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!

The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!

The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

## OPS REVIEW SETUP



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

PlayStation  
Official Magazine Australia

## GAME OF THE MONTH

**"Anyone who lets *The Darkness* pass them by will be missing out on a true classic..."** *The Darkness*, page 76

PS3



### THE DARKNESS

Pushing the boundaries of shooters as we know them – page 76

- *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* p.72
- *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* p.80

PS2



### LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY

Lara returns to her roots – page 82

- *Spider-Man 3* p.84
- *Naruto: Uzumaki Chronicles* p.85
- *Demon Chaos* p.86

PSP



### DRIVER 76

Burning up the Big Apple! – page 90

- *Legend of the Dragon* p.91
- *Aces of War* p.91

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ RELEASE: JUNE 2007  
■ DEVELOPER: TEAM NINJA  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$109.95  
■ HD: 1080p  
■ WEB: www.tecmogames.com

■ BACK STORY: The *Ninja Gaiden* series kicked off as an arcade rumbler called *Shadow Warriors*, and played a lot like *Double Dragon*. Years later it found its way to Xbox, and is now here in all its shiny new HD glory on the PS3!

# NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

The tea party's over

The ninja must be as water. Balance is a constant. His strike must surely crush rock. His energy must be imbued with the stillness of cold winter. Once a pupil has achieved such they may throw on some black and hop around lopping up sods like carrots while throwing ninja stars and screaming "hahahahaha!" ~ The Sugary Scroll of the Ninja, page 1.

Let's cut the salami from the start: ninjas are the balls. They've been sneaking around poisoning, slicing, pillaging and assassinating people since 700AD, practising an acute awareness of their surroundings while performing the inhuman. For some unexplainable reason, though, there's a serious shortage of quality ninja pop goodness. A great ninja film hasn't hit the screen in recent memory and ninja games are – well – more invisible than they should be. The *Tenchi* series on PS2 went downhill faster than a baby in a loose shopping trolley, and the *TMNT* titles have all been cash-ins.

And then there was Team Ninja. Tecmo's favourite first party developer reached back into history and updated the esteemed *Ninja Gaiden* franchise from the bowels of esotericism onto Microsoft's old black box. It took them five years to create the game, but the result was a monumental title that, admittedly, had us PlayStation lads seeking Xbox aversion therapy. The top news is that *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*, a visually overhauled, finely tuned version of the already stellar Xbox classic, has arrived on PlayStation 3 along with a huge array of face-smacking improvements.

You play as warrior Ryu Hayabusa of the Hayabusa clan. When these guys aren't bragging to geisha girls that they're in a "clan" they're presiding over a couple of swords that, if in the wrong hands, would tilt the natural balance and release horrendous dragon-like evil onto all and sundry. Ryu himself watches over sword numero uno – the Dragon Sword, while the rest of his homies and his big pappa watch over the Dark Dragon Blade – a flame-like weapon that could bring about a bloody apocalypse (and maybe even raise petrol prices). One day as luck would have it, while Ryu is out hacking up other ninjas from an allied clan (because that's what ninja buddies do to each other), the Hayabusa village is ransacked by the demon Doku who kills the remaining

Hayabusa clan and absconds with the Dark Dragon Blade. The bastard. Normal folk would simply call the police, but as 000 is obviously not in the ninja phone book, Ryu sets off on a revenge binge to kill Doku and get his clan's sword back.

#### GET YOUR NINJA ON

With one hand dipped in ninjutsu lore and the other in an alternate world smacked with a mash of future and rustic styles, *Ninja Gaiden* throws you into one of the toughest third-person combat games ever. Unlike *Tenchi*, which based its ninjas off historical accounts of their assassin-like ways, *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* is a technoriental rampage. There's no place to hide here. Leaping ninja slashes, berserk

combos, a platoon's worth of weapons (including snazzy dual swords), and the odd bit of magic back you up as you take on a production line of futuristic gunmad guards, tanks, demonic three-storey skeletons, axe-packing zombies, flaming samurai on horseback, flocks of teleporting monsters, and even the odd indifferent ninja. If variety is a spice, *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*'s death pack is a pearler of a curry.

Patience is required, though. We weren't burning up the word count when we said the game was an anvil of a nut to crack. Harkening back to the retro days of yore when games couldn't be saved and the princess almost always got defiled by her captors, *Sigma* is hard to the power of infinity squared plus a few for good measure. Its modulus of toughness is without peer on the PS3, so much so that the only games able to match it for difficulty are probably *Devil May Cry 3* and that other ninja bruiser, *Shinobi* – both PS2 games. While it's thankfully more doable than its Xbox draft, even its bottom tier AI assassins are able to cut your heart out at any time with their brilliant pack tactics and pure aggression. A common criticism of

action games like this is that the enemies are nothing but brainless fodder, a potty-filler wall slowing you as you try to progress to the end of the game. This is not so in *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* where there are few puzzles to solve and it's left to the enemies and insane combat to keep it all fresh.

#### THE ART OF THE NINJA AIN'T ON A CANVAS

In fact, slap a blue ribbon on the sword clang and footsy wootsy, *Sigma* does violence just as flawlessly as the *God of War* games, and in some instances better. While *Sigma* does require you to memorise a few lengthy combos, its varied assortment of enemies demand constant alterations of strategy. One moment you might be leaping through the air running off walls as you dodge clouds of bullets, the next you're facing off against a group of explosive-grenade chucking ninjas. Fortunately you're given a helluva lot of ninja grunt. Every strike can be turned into a combination that can knock down

■ "The key to this dance move is keeping your arms out like this. Dammit! Bah, this is useless. Tango class is over"





■ "Check out these divine leather slippers. Why are you running away?"

### NINJAS DIG BOOBS, TOO

Ninja Gaiden Sigma includes a bunch of missions where you relinquish control of Ryu and swing the axe of an infamous fiend hunter called Rachel. To put it bluntly, Rachel has an enormous pair of *baptistas* courtesy of those healthy tit-pervs at Team Ninja who were obviously deprived of the milky bosom at birth. Anyway, in true *Dead or Alive* style, her bosoms move like a candlelit tide and – well – it's quite funny. Something else to say about Rachel... erm... ah yes, she has a big axe and likes to kill monsters. Not that we paid much notice...



■ "What's this giant fish hook for? I'm glad you asked." (stabbing sound)





a group of enemies if timed right, and there are also a host of throws that can be learnt and new moves to be bought as you upgrade your weapons. Beyond that, *Sigma* uses an essence system to make every melee procreate its own momentum. As each enemy falls they release a coloured orb – or essence – that Ryu can either pick up and use as currency, or absorb into his sword to power his next strike into an Ultimate Technique.

By using these palpably bloody killing techniques to slay other enemies, even more essence is released, allowing Ryu to absorb them again into his blade for an endless chain of bloodletting.

These nuances only further establish *Sigma* as a game for the iron-nosed player and not the flippant pad smacker. While playing the

game in the OPS office its fury attracted the attention of many casual gaming onlookers who stared at the screen with the expression one might have if they just called Mike Tyson a pussy to his face. If, for instance, you found *God of War* too tough to beat then don't bother trying to get your ninja on here. You'll cuss through the first couple of levels, take a strong shot of scotch and won't come back. On the other hand, if you're the sort of indoor-only twitch addict who times how long it takes them to beat action Everests, then *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* will be as deep as you want it to be, as you immerse yourself in the intricacies of karma collection, amassing combos and the fastest techniques for dispatching the theatrical end-of-level bosses.

#### **HOTTER THAN A NINJA'S BLADE?**

To see *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* is to be smacked in the face with buttery animation. Ryu's movement in particular, as he bounces on enemy heads and electrically slashes through crops of creatures, is without obvious fault and the rest of the fray is certainly of a remarkable standard. Call us greedy, though, but if there is one element of the game that anchors it to the previous generation

## ASK A NINJA

If you're cool then you'll have visited [askaninja.com](http://askaninja.com). Here you'll be able to email questions to a "true" ninja who will reply to the best questions via streaming video. Recent topics have yielded the ninja opinion on "mirrors", "college tips", "ninja poetry" and more. One topic was dedicated to proving that Santa is in actual fact a ninja. "Who else could travel the world in one night and sneak into that many houses? Only a ninja" he claims. His answer on whether or not ninjas go on dates is also a complete thumper. While potentially insulting to true ninjas, it's comedic fodder for the rest of us. Check it out.



Question #32  
"Ninja Dates"

■ "Why carry two swords? It's the only way I can wear this outfit in safety"



### INFO BYTE

Gaiden – pronounced g-i-y-den not g-a-y-den, translates into "side story" or a story outside the standard "continuum". We presume this is because the game is set in a sort of alternate version of Earth.

it's the inconsistency of the texture and lighting work. As Ryu hacks his way through a burning house towards his first confrontation with Doku, the blaze and crackle on the screen will singe a few eyebrows and curdle nerves. It's lightning-rod brilliant. However trekking through Tairon city, its bland graveyard, and further levels reveal an old engine faintly holding up a new coat of paint. It's far from ugly or poor – in fact it still looks 'good' – but good is a bore. You don't need to be a foot-licking gypsy to see that in a few months *Sigma* will be looking pancake flat.

The presentation is also a tad crumby in the voice-acting department, as is usually the case with games translated from Japanese. Considering the headway companies like Rockstar and EA have made with this discipline there's no room for shrugging shoulders when a poor effort is thrown on the table. Why, for a start, does Ryu from the Hayabusa clan of some oriental-flavoured alternate reality sound

like he's from the set of *Days of Our Lives*? Female ninja Ayane, who fires blow darts of info to you during your journey, is the worst offender as she whimpers away like an eight-year-old brat at show and tell. Masterminding some of the best action gaming in years is hard. Hiring the right voice talent is surely comparatively easy. What's the problem then?

The good news is that these criticisms are only puppy sins in the final analysis. You'll shake them off after a moment, then heartily rip your sword out and start tearing into the nearest moving object on-screen, absorbing blips and blops, pollinating the air with shuriken, and trying to reach that next damn save point. *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* is the cornerstone on which all future sharp-edge fiascos will be based. It'll take a huge chunk of your life to get through while forging monkish patience, and its sword dancing combat will be remembered every time you pick up a steak knife. **James Ellis**

### WHERE'S YOUR HEAD AT?

Disappointingly the human decapitations have again been omitted from the Australian build of *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* (as they were for the Xbox version). The overseas versions see Ryu lopping heads off like lilies every time he connects with one of his essence techniques, but we get bugger all of that because a group of politicians think it'll – we don't know – make people go round cutting people's heads off or something. GUYS, come on. Decapitation has been around for thousands of years and is – when you think about it – a fairly merciful way to go.



#### PROS:

- The ninja combat kicks ass
- It's longer than *War and Peace*.

#### CONS:

- You don't have any patience
- It's not a brand-new game

### VERDICT

*Ninja Gaiden Sigma* is a treasure chest of gaming goodness. Dig it up now.

OFFICIAL  
SCORE:  
**08**

■ GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER  
■ RELEASE: JUNE 2007  
■ DEVELOPER: STARBREEZE STUDIOS  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

■ PLAYERS: 1-8  
■ PRICE: \$119.95  
■ HD: 1080p  
■ WEB: www.starbreeze.com

■ BACK STORY: Starbreeze's previous credits include the amazing looking and surprisingly atmospheric 2003 FPS classic, *Riddick* (which is now being re-made for PS3). The subject matter may be decidedly nastier in *The Darkness* but it still shares a similar art direction.

# THE DARKNESS

Come over to the Dark Side...

We couldn't help but be a little sceptical when first hearing about *The Darkness*. A shooter based on an unknown comic book character who sprouts tentacles? Right... Nice one. Sounds about as mainstream as a unicorn racing sim. Then we saw last year's E3 demo...

We walked in snickering and walked out shell-shocked. *The Darkness* didn't silence our doubts as such, but instead shattered its jaw with the butt of a shotgun, shot out its knees, had a gremlin drive a jackhammer through its skull, tore its heart out, and then, set fire to it.

You had us at 'jackhammering skulls'... tear.

In five minutes *The Darkness* had come from nowhere to be one of our most-wanted games of 2007. Now we've played the final game. We're still shaking but we'll try and collect ourselves enough to give you a rough approximation of why it rocked our world.

#### THE BIG BANG

Apparently there was some massive explosion that created all life in the universe. It's supposed to be the biggest event in history. Wrong. Sorry

science, but whoever came up with that theory clearly hadn't seen *The Darkness*.

All games need to start off with a bang. If the first five minutes of a game aren't so exciting that you're left gagging to see more and reaching for your wallet to buy it, then the developer has failed. End of story. Some games have absolutely no idea about this and bore you with hours of training missions before the action starts, others know how to weave their training tips into exciting intros, and then... there's *The Darkness*.

During the ridiculously stylish, and fully playable opening credits sequence you find yourself being thrown around the back seat of a speeding Cadillac, while two mafia goons yell abuse at each other. Turns out a job's gone wrong and it's not long before police cars are ramming the Caddie as it speeds recklessly through oncoming traffic, one of your mafia buddies has handed you a shotgun and you're thrown right into the thick of it.

Within the first few minutes you'll have heard more swearing and thick Italian accents than an hour's worth of *The Sopranos*, discovered the dirt on why local mob boss Uncle Paulie wants you whacked, seen more cartwheeling police car wrecks than a Bruckheimer blockbuster, capped 20 thugs with an assault shotgun and witnessed a grisly

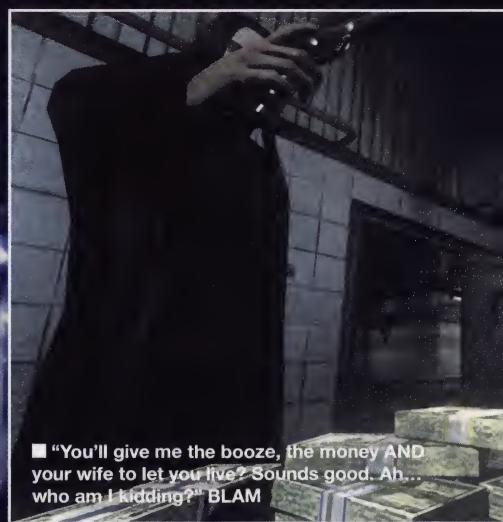
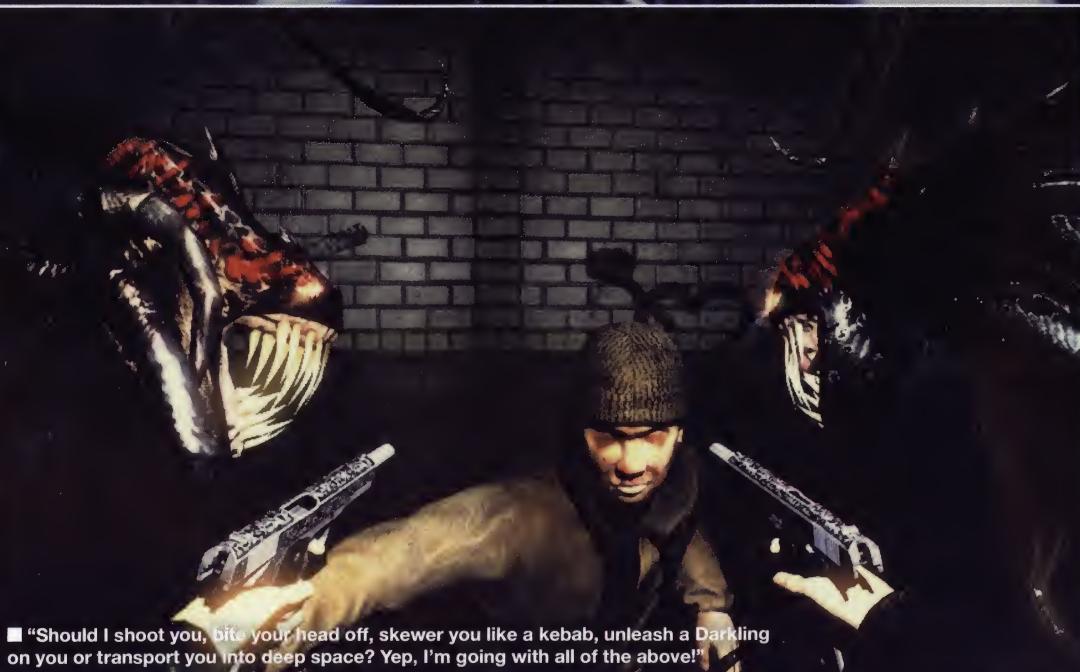
automotive-related decapitation.

This intro is exciting as all hell. What's arguably even more impressive though is that the game simultaneously managed to set up an intriguing plot and teach you how the shooting mechanics work.

#### YOU DON'T KNOW JACK-IE

Now that we've gotten over the excitement of the first level we should probably tell you in on who you'll be playing as in *The Darkness*. The game's main man is a mafia hitman called Jackie Estacado. As the story unfolds we're told the car chase we've just witnessed takes place on the night of his 21st birthday - "That was the first time I died". The FIRST time? What the hell? Sorry but we're going to have to leave you puzzling over that one. You'll thank us later.

As you fight to stay alive during an epic shoot out with scores of heavies in a construction yard you'll also begin to take in more of the game's fundamental mechanics. Initially you'll just be thinking "bloody hell, this is intense!" but as you gather your thoughts you'll begin to notice why. Like the similarly atmospheric 2005 shooter *King Kong*, *The Darkness* is totally devoid of any medpacks or a HUD (on-screen bars and stats).



■ "Meet Grumpy. He likes poetry, moonlit walks AND tearing your head off with his bare hands."





■ Darklings – they like to party. Finding willing guests is never easy though



**"If the first five minutes of a game aren't so exciting that you're left gagging to see more, then the developer has failed"**

Whenever you've ingested too much lead the screen will be washed in a red haze. This is your cue to make a desperate dash for cover. Hide in safety for a few seconds and you'll be fighting fit again. As for the game's lack of a crosshair, each of your guns has a nifty laser sight that paints a red dot on your target whenever you're aiming. The system for ammo is similarly intuitive. Run over a gun and it'll briefly flash up your new ammo count for that weapon. Completely run out of bullets (in either gun if you're dual wielding) and Jackie will instantly flip the gun around into a melee grip and literally start whacking people. It couldn't be easier.

#### HEART OF DARKNESS

It'll hardly come as big surprise but the bulk of the game's action involves your Darkness powers. It turns out that as

well as being a popular rock band, *The Darkness* is a supremely powerful entity that inhabits Jackie on this very night. The Darkness (voiced disturbingly believably by Mike Patton) is a malicious entity that draws its power from the shadows. By shooting out nearby lights you can summon The Darkness and take advantage of its ruthlessly efficient killing machines.

The Darkness power that you'll likely rely on most is the ability to send out tentacles to do your killing for you. These tentacles are roughly the size of those monstrous Amazonian anacondas that Hollywood seems fond of making movies about, except these guys don't swallow their prey whole. Instead, the Darkness tentacles prefer to simply crush their heads... then devour their still-beating hearts.

As well as satisfying the bloodlust of even the goriest gaming fans, these tentacle

#### WHAT'S ON THE TUBE?

Dotted around the game's New York environment you'll find many fully functional televisions. Like every other shooter ever made, naturally you can shoot them, but what's really new is the ability to watch several full length movies on them. Flick around the channels and you'll find old school Hollywood classics like *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You can even unlock special accomplishments like 'Casanova' if you want to sit around and watch TV with Jackie's girlfriend Jenny.

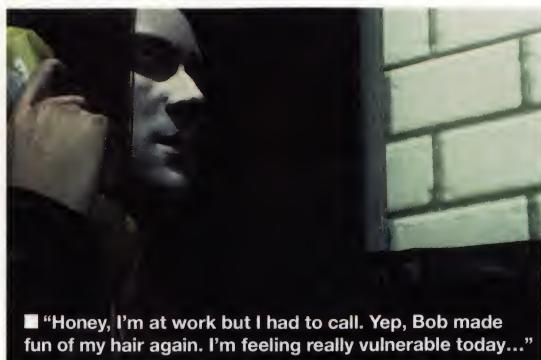


## INFO BYTE

You wouldn't be up to much chop as a mafia hitman if you didn't know how to execute people. Walk up behind suckers unnoticed and shoot them with a gun to trigger some seriously nasty executions.



■ "Chopper 14 to base. Both my legs are broken and I don't think that cooking flesh smell is coming from a BBQ. Request medical assistance."



■ "Honey, I'm at work but I had to call. Yep, Bob made fun of my hair again. I'm feeling really vulnerable today..."



■ "Drop the weapon while I shoot! Oh... Bugger. It's 'or I'll shoot' isn't it? I always get those mixed up"

## SOLVING PUZZLES

Although you'll spend most of the game popping caps and tearing hearts out, there are a handful of puzzles to tackle. Like the rest of the game, the puzzles are all sensible and, best of all, often have multiple solutions. Find a locked gate and you can either send your tentacle snaking over the gate to unlock it, spawn a Darkling on the far side of the gate and have him unlock it or just shoot the power box through the fence.



attacks let you pick off your enemies from relative safety. By viewing the action from tentacle-cam you can control your monster as it snakes around, stalking its prey.

Another very handy feature of *The Darkness* is that it can summon a variety of Darklings to do your bidding. These Darklings are two foot-tall gremlin-like creatures that are only too happy to help you kill lots of people. One type, the Berserkers, carry weapons like saws and jackhammers and will hack into anyone in range. There are also Gunners (complete with minigun, WWII helmet and cigar) and our favourite, the Kamikazes. These crazy bastards carry a bundle of TNT on their back and like nothing better than running into a group of enemies and laughing maniacally as they press down on the plunger. We love those little guys.

Still want more ways to kill people? Why not try stabbing enemies through the chest with the pointy end of one of your Darkness tentacles, lifting them into the air, then flicking their carcass away like a ragdoll?

If any of the enemies really piss you off though, there's one sure-fire way to rub them out. As well as having stabby, chompy tentacles and psychotic gremlins, *The Darkness* can also CREATE BLACK

HOLES! There's nothing quite like the look on a goon's face as a swirling black hole opens up beside him and crushes all of the room's contents, then sucks it into deep space.

### AFTER DARK

You've now got a good handle on how the mechanics of *The Darkness* work and why it makes wasting goons more enjoyable than pretty much any game in history, but like all great games, we've only really scratched the surface. There are so many other elements that make it a classic, from little things like amusing enemy taunts and the way your two Darkness tentacles hiss and snap at each other as they fight over a fresh heart, to shocking plot twists and visits to entirely new dimensions (that we're not going to spoil for you).

Although you can probably suss this out from the screenshots, it's worth

mentioning that the graphics are utterly amazing and easily challenge *Resistance* and *MotorStorm* for 'best PS3 graphics yet' bragging rights. While the environments aren't huge, the textures are impeccably detailed and the lighting effects bring a level of believability never before seen.

The only criticism we could level at *The Darkness* would be in terms of its lifespan. Most people will likely be able to fight their way to the epic conclusion in around eight hours. Sure there's a multiplayer mode and plenty of secrets to discover but you can't help wanting more, especially when it's so damn good.

Anyone who lets *The Darkness* pass them by will be missing out on a true classic. Although we were sceptical at first, having super powers in a shooter is so much fun we doubt we could ever get as excited about a regular 'only human' shooter again. **■ Narayan Pattison**

### PROS:

- Amazing Darkness abilities
- Gorgeous graphics

### CONS:

- It's all over a little early
- The sequel's not out yet

## VERDICT:

Stunning, original and gory as all hell. You'd have to be dim to miss *The Darkness*.

### OFFICIAL SCORE:

**09**

■ Dating For Dummies 101. Don't hit on a hitman. Not wise



# T3

The world's No.1 gadget mag



**T3 IS THE REAL  
PLAY STATION**

■ **GENRE:** ACTION/ADVENTURE  
■ **RELEASE:** NOW  
■ **DEVELOPER:** EUROCOP  
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** FUNTASTIC

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2  
■ **PRICE:** \$99.95  
■ **HD:** 1080p  
■ **WEB:** [www.disneyinteractive.com](http://www.disneyinteractive.com)

■ **BACK STORY:** You could say that Eurocom has had a decent whack at converting movies and TV to games, having a stab at various Disney releases: not to mention a Harry Potter, a Bond and a Predator. Now that's a diverse mix.



# PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END

Walk the plank...

## INFO BYTE

It's not all bad... the score really puts you there with the same outstanding orchestral sound you'd hear in the cinemas providing some much needed ambience.

There's been an unsettling turn of events surrounding recent blockbuster movie tie ins. It's thrown our world into chaos, spinning wildly out of control. These titles, if you can believe it, are actually pretty darn good. Some, we'd go so far as to say, kick righteous ass. *King Kong* and *Spider-Man 3* really raised the bar, and separated themselves from their peers, urging us not to judge a book by its cover, and rightly so. As a result, we had high expectations for *Pirates of the*

*Caribbean: At World's End*. It's the *Return of the Jedi* for the series, and has a lot riding on it, as the second flick fell more than a little flat. *At World's End* has all the components for an epic, swashbuckling adventure on the high seas – likeable characters forced to ally with past adversaries, setting in motion a plan to rescue an immensely charismatic, lovable rogue from the hands of the Kraken, and Davy Jones and his barnacle ridden cohorts. We were expecting a high energy, fluid romp, killing, pillaging, plundering and getting up to general mischief. Perhaps even send a few mangy dogs to Davy Jones' Locker, with a touch of style and panache... savvy?

That's not what we got, not by a long shot, unless this is Bizarro World, and last time we checked it most certainly wasn't. We almost felt an odd sense of relief. Our

world was no longer in chaos. *POTC: At World's End* has finally restored the balance, and here's why...

When you think of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, you think of one thing, a roller coaster thrill ride. Never knowing what's around the corner, and tangible sense of excitement. This doesn't translate though. We thought we'd take a leaf out of Clint Eastwood's book and break it down to you

in three parts.

## THE GOOD

One thing we've gotta admit, is they nailed the character models. Kinda helps when you're working with ILM (Industrial Light and Magic). Each one looks exactly as their real life counterpart with some great face mapping, though they could have been a touch sharper. It's all just

■ "Nice hat. Did your boyfriend pick it out for you?"





a little soft, and muted. Some items are fairly easy to make out, as they float in the air, such as health and coin purses, however, others, like iron bars, daggers and occasionally levers are almost indistinguishable from the background, bar the tiny white arrow showing you where said item is. It seems weird to us to define one, and not the other. In the cut-scenes, Jack... yes, yes, we know, ahem *Captain*

Jack Sparrow saunters around with all the unique and quirky mannerisms Johnny Depp infused into the rascal, right down to the poncey swagger, albeit stagger, in his step. In contrast though, the way he handles in game is just a little sluggish and unplayable. His gait, at times, feels like

you're in slow motion and you'll feel compelled to hit **□** to run around instead.

#### THE BAD

The combat mechanics could have definitely used an overhaul here. We're not expecting *God of War II*, but with action intensive hits on the way like *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* and *Heavenly Sword*, we're starting to see what the PS3 is capable of. We want to experience the next level of gaming, and this isn't it. Your moves are extremely limited, with only a punch and sword combination available. It's basically two hits on an enemy, they turn their back and start presenting, you deliver the money shot, and bada-bing, bada-bam, bada-boom... it's just that simple. There's no way to chain combinations together, so you don't really get your mojo flowing. Even earlier PSP versions had more to offer by way of variety.

Next to your health bar is a sword meter, which increases with successful attacks.

Once it starts to fill, you'll be prompted to hit **□**

and then hit **△**, **○**, **□** or **▲** to trigger a finishing move. Jack's finisher is particularly satisfying, as he knocks them on their arse and thrusts his sword through their black heart as they're on the ground. A couple more of these, or even a deeper offensive

palate would have really worked wonders in expanding this game.

#### THE UGLY

Blocking and duelling: instead of a traditional block, which seems obvious, they've gone for a countering system. Basically a red ring forms around an enemy when he's about to attack. Pressing **□** in the direction of the attacker results in an oopsie daisy over the shoulder type manoeuvre. A sword-fighting game without a block button is inexcusable.

Playing *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* is remarkably similar to courting a gorgeous model with not much going on upstairs. Sure it looks sexy enough on the surface, and you're excited to get your hands on it, but once you do, and fool around with it for a while, you'll ultimately become bored and move on to the next momentary distraction. Fans of casual, basic gaming, and of the films themselves, probably won't be too disappointed, but it's ultimately a very shallow slash 'em up.

Ye be warned... **►** **Dave Kozicki**

#### HAVE AT THEE!

Duelling could have been seven different types of awesome, with some crazy *Soul Calibur* type stuff going on. Well that's the dream. Reality, on the other hand, is a harsher mistress. You'll need to chain attacks together, and counter, by moving the left analogue to pre-empt your opponent's attacks, and respond in kind by mounting a vicious assault of your own. It's awkward, disjointed and frustrating as all hell. How about some *Errol Flynn*-esque heroics next time?



#### PROS:

- Looks the part
- Umm... Keira Knightly?

#### CONS:

- Doesn't feel or play the part
- Frustrating gameplay

**VERDICT:** Not nearly good enough considering its upcoming competition...

**OFFICIAL SCORE:**  
**06**

■ GENRE: ADVENTURE  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$99.95  
■ HD: 480p  
■ WEB: [www.crystald.com](http://www.crystald.com)

■ BACK STORY: If you don't know who Lara Croft is you might as well hard in your joypad now and leave without making a fuss. The *Tomb Raider* series had been floundering until Crystal Dynamics replaced CORE Design after the *Angel of Darkness* fiasco.



#### INFO BYTE

Rumour has it Lara's impossibly huge knockers were really a mistake. Creator Toby Gard has apparently attributed them to "a slip of the mouse" – he wanted to expand them 50% but hit 150% instead. Then he left it like that. Gosh, what a scamp.

# LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY

Back to the beginning...



**R**emakes. They really can be horrendous. Former classics dredged up, given a slap-dash facelift and flogged to unsuspecting former fans. It's a bad business this remake rubbish.

Let sleeping dogs lie, that's what we say. Generally.

#### SO... THIS IS A BAD GAME?

No. That was a ruse. You see, it's not always the case. Some remakes are pretty astonishing. *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, for instance, was a fantastic game.

So is *Tomb Raider: Anniversary*.

The unique thing with *Anniversary* is that it shares far more in common with its ancestor than most retro-remakes. The original is only a decade old, and the story and locations haven't needed to

be updated. Key moments, memorable set-pieces and distinctive environments have made the jump, but it's still feels rejuvenated enough to ensure you never feel like you're just going through the motions with snazzier graphics and a slightly less colossal bust.

The story is still the same – spunky spelunker and archaeologist-for-hire Lara Croft, a woman as smart as she is beautiful and as athletic as she is... ample, is contracted to recover a mysterious artefact from the Tomb of Qualopec in Peru. The treasure in question is a segment of the Atlantean Scion, an object of incredible power. But not all is what it seems, and soon Lara is off on a race to recover the two remaining fragments travelling from Peru to Greece, Egypt and finally Atlantis itself.

It also features the same breathtaking,

heart-in-mouth moments as CORE's hit – notably the T-rex reveal and the approach to the Sphinx. These moments really don't carry the same gravitas of their 1996 equivalents (the T-rex attack is spoiled a little by the fact it's pre-empted by a brief cutscene – it was better when you were immediately in danger the second you saw it round the corner) but they're nonetheless welcome.

Even much of the haunting music is the same or, at the very least, eerily similar. There's no doubt *Anniversary* has the utmost respect for its roots.

Like the original, and completely unlike every *Tomb Raider* since, human enemies are very few and far between. The bulk of your assailants are hungry members of the animal kingdom – wolves, bears, bats, lions, crocodiles and (gasp) dinosaurs. The rest are supernatural.

Your arsenal has also been pared back to the bare basics, just as it was a decade ago. Your dual pistols are your default pieces, but you'll be able to uncover a pair of more powerful pistols, a shotgun and a duo of Uzi SMGs – but ammo is scarce. The focus isn't on





**“A lot was made of *Tomb Raider: Legend* being a return to Lara’s roots, but *Anniversary* is the true owner of that accolade.”**

■ “Bite me!” said Lara, not realising the crocodile would take her quip literally (and that it understood English, apparently)



gunplay, like the past brace of *Tomb Raider* titles – it’s about exploration.

#### SO... WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

The visuals, for starters. It goes without saying really. The graphics are great, and the fact that the game supports progressive scan is a real boon.

It also features a reasonably forgiving checkpoint system rather than the original’s save crystal mechanic. Gamers commonly have far less patience than they did a decade ago, and regular checkpoints make the trial-and-error nature of some of Lara’s acrobatics all the more palatable. The difficulty curve is a little steep, but with *Anniversary*’s emphasis on skills over thrills, it’s arguably aimed more at the thoughtful set anyway.

The biggest difference however, is that *Anniversary* plays just like *Legend* – which is to be expected. Lara isn’t tied to a grid, and you don’t need to shuffle slowly about. You have fully analogue control of Lara, and her athletic range is as it was in *Legend*, including the grappling hook (which isn’t magnetic), rope swinging and ledge-grabbing moves. *Anniversary* also keeps the ability to hammer Ⓛ to recover from a poor landing or rhythmically speed up climbing and shimmying and adds the ability to balance atop poles (with a large grin on her face, presumably).

Like *Legend* you can expect a variety of unlockable outfits too, rewarded for uncovering hidden treasures and completing time trials.

Croft Manor has also made a return, although disappointingly it’s a tweaked version of the one that appeared in *Legend*, and it all seems a little drab. We’d have preferred a renovated version of the one in the original, complete with an outdoors obstacle course and a butler we could lock in the freezer.

The funny thing is, despite the fact it’s a remake of an 11-year-old PSOne favourite, *Anniversary* really is a breath of fresh air. They really don’t make them like this anymore. Patient, intelligent and rewardingly taxing at times, *Anniversary* is a near-perfect fusion of old-school attention to detail and contemporary quality. It’s long too – longer than *Legend* by a huge margin.

A lot was made of *Tomb Raider: Legend* being a return to Lara’s roots, but *Anniversary* is the true owner of that accolade. A remarkable re-imagining of a modern classic.

Come on lads, how about a PS3 version? ▶ Luke Reilly

#### YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY

It’s strange just how much playing *Tomb Raider: Anniversary* makes you want to ransack the garage for your old copy of the original and give it another spin. It truly is a testimony to the 1996 classic that it still stands up today. At the time of its release, the level of sophistication it achieved with its inventive and addictive puzzle-solving gameplay, its focus on exploration over action, its cinematic soundtrack and intelligent approach to storytelling was absolutely unprecedented.



#### PROS:

- The best one since *Tomb Raider*
- Compelling, intelligent, puzzling

#### CONS:

- You never liked Lara
- You’re an idiot

**VERDICT:** Comes closer to recapturing the magic of the original than any *Tomb Raider* since.

**OFFICIAL SCORE: 09**

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: ACTIVISION  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: VICARIOUS VISIONS

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$49.95  
■ HD: 576i  
■ WEB: www.vicariousvisions.com

■ BACK STORY: This is the fourth Spider-Man game to hit the PS2. Prior to this we saw the brilliant cel shaded adventure *Ultimate Spider-Man*. Based in Marvel's simplified universe it allowed players to also control Spidey's arch nemesis, Venom.

# SPIDER-MAN 3

Crushing the faith of True Believers...

**S**pider-Man 3 on PS2 is the series' illegitimate child. Unloved, malnourished, and laden with hand-me-downs from its impressive next gen brothers, it's set to amble towards the nearest dark alley and plunge into the chasm of forgettable games. Hell, Activision is pimping it out the door for \$49.95 – a new PS2 game!

A no-brainer, *Spider-Man 3* is heavily modelled after Treyarch's *Spider-Man 2* game that was released three years ago along with the second film. Like that sterling release, *Spider-Man 3* features an open Manhattan island for Spidey to cavort through. While this vaulted eyebrows at the time, expecting it to have the same effect now is, well, a bit of a pipe dream. After all, gamers crave progress. What's completely unacceptable then is that *Spider-Man 3*

has a laundry list of visual problems that the previous game did not. The cityscape is now coated in a washed out flush of single-texture colours, cars pop into view, frame-rate and loading issues are constant, and the whole thing seems unfinished. Perhaps it is.

Mind you, fans typically don't care for such nuances. To them it's all about the gameplay, the sensation and recreation of being the webslinger! Yes, the city swinging is still a buzz, but the controls as a whole feels less responsive this time around, particularly when you try to do something a tad tricky like leap from a swing and sprint up a building into combat.

In terms of mission design, the game is again divided up into chapters that see Spidey take on the game's major villains. Between the start and end of each chapter

you can choose to hit the street and engage in the "free roaming" experience by swinging around and beating up fluffy-headed punks. It gets old quickly, with the general combat not able to offer a modicum of the fun offered by braver titles like *God of War II*. Fortunately, there's some fun to be had hacking through the game chapters as you tackle a line up of foes that goes beyond the three-villain scope of the popcorn cruncher. The Lizard, Morbius, and Shriek all await, with each boss encounter supplying an easy but welcome change of pace.

All up, though, they do little to mask the blandness that is the rest of *Spider-Man 3*. With scrappy visuals – even for the PS2 – lazy filler and inferior controls to previous games, it's best fans steer clear of its weathered web. **James Ellis**

## "GOT ANY BLACKER?"

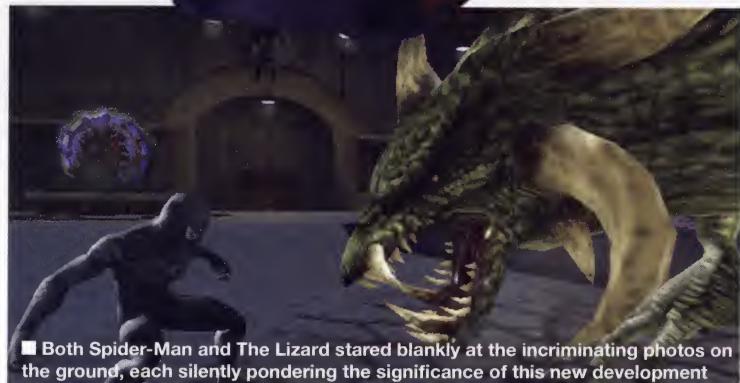
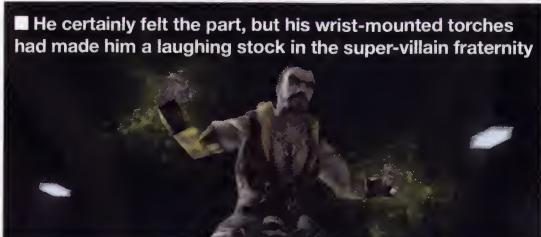
Unlike with other versions of the game, the PS2 title allows you to put Spidey's black symbiote suit on and off at will. When on, you'll receive a boost in power, speed and health, but lose the ability to perform adrenaline attacks. Leave the suit on for too long, though, and Pussy Parker will faint and you'll have to restart from a checkpoint. While it's certainly not as cool as Dante's devil trigger, it serves as a handy tool that anchors the game to the film.



■ Black Spider-Man. He listens to Good Charlotte and wears eye-liner



■ He certainly felt the part, but his wrist-mounted torches had made him a laughing stock in the super-villain fraternity



### PROS:

■ Swinging through Manhattan never gets old.

### CONS:

■ Crusty controls, ugly visuals, bland combat – shall we go on?

## VERDICT:

Unfinished, rushed, badly put together? *Spider-Man 3* is a combination of them all.

### INFO BYTE

Activision has recently announced that it has secured the rights to pump out official Spider-Man games 'til 2017.

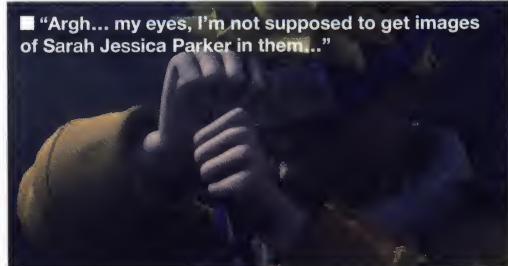
### OFFICIAL SCORE:

**05**

■ GENRE: ACTION/ADVENTURE  
■ RELEASE: JUNE 2007  
■ DEVELOPER: BANDAI NAMCO/CAVIA  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$69.95  
■ RESOLUTION: 576i  
■ WEB: www.atari.com.au

■ BACK STORY: Cavia is no newcomer to dealing with anime to PS2 conversions, many of its previous outings showed a great deal of potential. Coupling with Bandai and its deep catalogue of anime-inspired titles should be the start of a beautiful partnership.



#### INFO BYTE

Hitting **1** and **2** transforms you into a redheaded sex kitten, who distracts your adversaries with pure unadulterated hotness and delivers a powerful defensive bitch slap.

# NARUTO: UZUMAKI CHRONICLES

You're a ninja?

The anime-based game has always been a tough chestnut to crack. Where does one begin and another end? The process has always been more than a little formulaic: (a) create cartoon (b) garner a fan base (c) pump out some T-shirts and figurines (d) wait for the eventual multi media tie-in. Cut, print, we're done... which leads us to (e) retirement on a private island draped with women, falling asleep on a bed made of crisp \$100 bills. With so many contenders out there, who has the gumption to separate themselves from the pack? Anyone can wrap a towel around their head and look the part, but that alone does not a ninja make...

*Naruto: Uzumaki Chronicles* is a hard one to describe. It's a bit of a mixed bag. Some aspects are more than appealing

and you can't wait to just dive in there, yet others are infuriating and frustrating, making you want to reach for a billy-club and bring the hammer down. *Naruto: UC* definitely looks the part. The use of CG is a welcome change from the stock anime cel-shading, as is the third-person adventure styled gameplay.

You play the hot-headed smarty-pants Naruto, and he moves with all the kung fu prowess you'd expect and more. You've got fireballs, dashes, blocks, dodges, mini teleports and worst comes to worst, you can always shove a shuriken up the ass of anyone who offends your honour. And before you ask, yes, the cloning technique is there, and is painfully addictive. At any time, you can materialise up four clones, and let them beat your enemies, while you

sit back, relax and meditate.

Now it's not all peaches and cream. The characters come off a little bland, as do the repetitive, linear missions. The camera is a bit quirky, though nowhere near the worst we've seen, and don't get us started on the AI. Though your enemies may outnumber you drastically at times, some will literally wait for you to come on over and send them to the next life. How about some *Ninja Gaiden* type badasses, that'll leave you howling in frustration and ripping the joysticks in two?

*Naruto: Uzumaki Chronicles* is a fun little distraction that may have nailed the aesthetics unbelievably well, but never truly embraced the youthful exuberance and mischievousness of the show. It's a shame really. **Dave Kozicki**

#### GOT SKILLS?

As you clear out rival ninja hoards, fallen enemies will drop various items. Some of these will increase your "virtue" count. These operate as currency to buy upgrades to your attacking/defensive powers and can even access your new combos. Each new power is designated a specific shape, which fits into a mould also known as a Skill plate. The twist is, you can only equip a certain amount of these at any time, depending on the size of your plate, and shape of your attributes. Nothing like a little mix 'n' match we always say...



#### PROS:

- Nice variety of combos
- Comfortable controls

#### CONS:

- Dull AI
- Not very engaging

#### VERDICT:

A little more polish could have set it apart, but it's still head and shoulders above most of its peers.

#### OFFICIAL SCORE:

07

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: GENKI  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$49.95  
■ HD: 576i  
■ WEB: <http://www.genki.co.jp/en/>

■ BACK STORY: Created by sometime Japanese developer Genki and released in their homeland in 2005, *Ikusagami* boasted the largest scale battles on PS2, bar none. Finally localised as *Demon Chaos*, the game takes on *Dynasty Warriors* for large-scale action supremacy.

# DEMON CHAOS

Where there are demons, there's chaos

The Sengoku period of Japanese history was a chaotic time, with many factions battling for dominion in bloody drawn-out warfare. What the warlords didn't realise was that the greed, hatred and anger in the hearts of men in this time of turmoil let the demons breach through this realm's barriers and spread their darkness on the world.

Ambushed by demons, a young priestess flees to a nearby shrine and sends a desperate prayer to the gods. Her plea is answered in a flash of light. An imposing figure appears and dispatches the attacking demons in the blink of an eye. The unlikely pair embark on a crusade to return light to the land.

Upon getting down to action, the first thing you'll notice about *Demon Chaos* is the sheer amount of objects that are thrown around. Right from the outset you'll be siding with hundreds of troops, and taking on seething seas of spider demons. The engine

can reputedly handle over 65,000, and while we didn't stop to count, there were definitely a staggering number of combatants on display. Unlike many games of this kind, your troops can actually be given basic orders, making them reasonably useful in conflict without slowing down the action.

Another advance that *Demon Chaos* brings to the fold is its magical Pillar system, which allows you to deploy enchanted totems that have effects like healing, ranged support and so on. As an added benefit, operating in synergy with allied troops is rewarded via a topping up your Spirit bar (the equivalent of your Musou or Rage bar in *Dynasty Warriors*), giving you ample motivation to co-operate and coordinate your attacks.

Sadly, that's where the good news ends. The main flaw with *Demon Chaos* is the fact that your character is utterly godly, and you can tear through most of the game (barring boss encounters) without even sustaining damage, and it nearly

becomes a case of mindlessly pressing buttons. Foolishly, rendered cut-scenes break up the action whereas the *Dynasty Warriors* approach of updating the situation while the action continues would have been much wiser.

The camera is also a little lacklustre, and you're forced to choose between 'really close', which is good for seeing detail, but limits your vision, or 'really far', at which point it can be hard to see the dark coloured units against the backdrop of the dark coloured terrain.

A few more playable characters would've been good too. While our Lion-esque hero is cool, more characters would have added much-needed variety where the game's weapon selection does not.

*Demon Chaos* is not without its charm, but even for the budget price, it's hard to justify the expenditure. **■ Nick O'Shea**

## JUST TOO GOD

The lion deity you control in *Demon Chaos* is, well, far more awesome than it should be. You can easily take out hundreds of enemies in one long, unbroken combo. Merely pressing the **○** button produces a massive explosion that sends scores of demons back to hell, and let's not even mention the Rage mode that sends you ploughing through foes like a rocket-propelled cyclone of unadulterated destruction.

How is this a problem? Well, when your foes become trivial, it gets a bit boring after a while.



■ "Dammit Hiro! I told you not to use your toaster in the rain!"



■ "Hmm. A horde of giant poisonous spiders. Yep, I'm dead."



### PROS:

- Massive, chaotic battles
- Brings some new elements

### CONS:

- Ultimately shallow gameplay
- General lack of presentation

## VERDICT:

Does a few things right, but not enough to create a compelling experience. Worth a rental.

OFFICIAL SCORE:  
**05**



The constant rocking made it difficult for Jack to apply makeup on the ship. The crew grew to accept Jack's occasional 'beauty breaks', but they would rarely join in

■ GENRE: ADVENTURE/ACTION  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: EUROCOP  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: FUNTASTIC

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$69.95  
■ HD: 576i  
■ WEB: www.us.playstation.com/PS2

PS3 PS2 PSP  
**REVIEW**



# PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLDS END

Haven't we done this before?

Not having seen the third cinematic instalment into the rapidly inflating trilogy (will this one suck as much as *The Matrix Revolutions*? Hope not!) this reviewer cannot say with any certainty how closely it follows the plot.

One can say, however, that it's not a very good game. It's not bash-your-head-with-a-brick bad. The graphics are passable, the swashbuckling, while limited, is fun for a short amount of time. It's just so unrelentingly average.

An example; you kill some pirates. You get their gold. A yellow 'action'

point appears. You press **A**, something happens; like you slide down a rope or blow up a door with a barrel of gunpowder. Then you go, slice up some more pirates, and find another 'action' point...

You get the idea. It seems almost a carbon copy of the equally unimpressive *POTC: DMC*. These games, these average movie tie-ins are rarely offensive enough to warrant an orifice ripping, but surely they could pull something out of the bag a bit better than this. *Spider-Man 3* (PS3) managed to veer way off from the movie's plot and made quite a cool game. This

on-rails adventure is sadly *Prince of Persia* meets *God of War* lite – and even that makes it sound way more fun than it is.

To its credit, it isn't actually a watered-down port of the PS3 version – it's actually a standalone game. Sadly though, the PS2

*Pirates* is all just a bit played out.

You can probably skip it. Unless you have a weird crush on game representations of Johnny Depp and Orlando Bloom. And the dude with the octopus head. **Anthony O'Connor**

**PROS:**

- You're blind to the flaws of poor movie tie-ins

**CONS:**

- It's a total on-rails, pick up the key/unlock the door experience

**VERDICT:**

Do something imaginative with your movie property or walk the bloody plank!

**OFFICIAL SCORE:**  
**05**



This game was so dull it actually gave us Gaul stones. Geddit? Gaul stones! Oh, screw you guys

■ GENRE: STRATEGY  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: BLACK BEAN  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$49.95  
■ HD: 576i  
■ WEB: www.history.com/games.do

PS3 PS2 PSP  
**REVIEW**



# THE HISTORY CHANNEL: GREAT BATTLES OF ROME

A game so boring it may turn you into stone. True story

Look, we'll say it now – we don't really like strategy games that much. There's just something, well, wrong about sitting on the couch, perched and ready to play something with running, jumping, climbing and shooting... and then move your forces from one area to another. And wait. It's more the kind of thing PC gamers seem to like to do – and frankly they can have it.

Any game presented by The History Channel is going to have a certain amount of dorkiness about it. Are you deeply

fascinated by battles in ancient Rome? Do you want to find what it was like facing the Gauls and Hannibal... but in a really dull and lifeless way?

If you answered yes to any of those questions then this is the game for you. Tiny warriors beating each other, re-enactments of ancient campaigns it's all very accurate (probably, we're not historians) and also very dry. So, so dry. And ugly. Really ugly. Battles are a clash of coloured blobs against slightly different coloured blobs. We've seen better

graphics fingerpainted on our fridge.

This would only be perfect if you had a school assignment on ancient battles of Rome, or if you are, in fact, an ancient Roman and want to check out how your mates are doing. Perhaps we're unfairly

judging a game because of its genre, but when the genre just doesn't suit the system – we're gonna have to go ahead and say it. Sorry *Great Battles of Rome* – we got bored before the first sword was unsheathed. **Anthony O'Connor**

**PROS:**

- You really love strategy games
- That's it...

**CONS:**

- Booooooooring...
- Did we mention it was boring?

**VERDICT:**

Hell, aside from the ATROCIOUS visuals this could rock the pants off a PC gamer. Maybe.

**OFFICIAL SCORE:**  
**02**

■ GENRE: ACTION  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: DISNEY INTERACTIVE  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: FUNTASTIC

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$49.95  
■ HD: 576i  
■ WEB: <http://disney.go.com>

# MEET THE ROBINSONS

Back to the future

What's going on here? Seriously. It was only three months ago that we almost choked on our cornflakes upon finding out that Disney's recent *Chicken Little* game, as opposed to being spirit crushingly awful, was actually pretty damn good. Well, slap our thighs and call us Roger if those industrious fellas down at Disney Interactive Studios haven't done it again. They've only gone and managed to release another kids game that doesn't make you want to kill yourself and gouge out your own eyeballs.

*Meet the Robinsons*, licensed from the Disney movie of the same name, hasn't quite hit the dizzy heights it reached with *Chicken Little: Ace in Action*, but stone the crows if it hasn't come remarkably close.



Sticking to the same, admittedly pretty, art design of previous Disney Games, *Meet the Robinsons* looks stunning, but unfortunately a couple of gnawing factors hold it back from true greatness.

The control system is undoubtedly the game's biggest hindrance. The fact that you can't jump in a game that looks, feels, and plays like a platformer is initially stifling, but compared to the insanely clumsy aiming, these shackles are completely forgivable. Trying to aim precisely is an exercise in futility, and switching between different weapons is completely unintuitive.

It's a great shame, because *Meet the Robinsons* almost treads the line of greatness that *Ace in Action* traversed so expertly. It's a solid kids game that trumps

most in its despicable market, but with more polished alternatives available, we can't help wanting more. **Mark Serrels**



■ Giant mushrooms: terrifying, yet delicious...



■ After 20 years of constant exercise, the Energizer bunnies had had enough...



#### WHY GET IT:

- Nice clean art design
- Can be a lot of fun

#### WHY LEAVE IT:

- Clumsy controls
- Main character sucks balls

#### OFFICIAL SCORE:

**07**

#### VERDICT:

Is this the beginning of a trend? Disney Studios ships out another half decent kids title.

# PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: PUZZLE  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: MAGENTA  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

■ PLAYERS: 1-4  
■ PRICE: \$99.95  
■ HD: 576i  
■ WEB: [www.buzzjunior.com](http://www.buzzjunior.com)



■ Robot vs Robot... Colour vs Colour... the ultimate fight to the finish...



■ Man we're sick of making captions about robots, will someone PLEASE make a game that doesn't have fricken robots in it?



# BUZZ! JUNIOR: ROBOJAM

Buzz off...

As one of the many peripheral led games giving the PS2 a brand new lease of life, *BUZZ!* is slowly evolving into a bit of a franchise. With the more adult orientated *BUZZ!: The Mega Quiz* about to make an appearance, developer Magenta has also found it in their hearts to bless the PS2 with a second instalment of the *BUZZ! Junior* series.

But the *BUZZ!* series has always played second fiddle to far superior party offerings such as *SingStar* and the awesome *Guitar Hero*, and the *Junior* derivatives have, thus far, only served to sully this slightly mediocre franchise further, moving away from the trivia based hilarity of the original, towards a reaction based

set of mini games designed exclusively for kids. Hence the 'junior' in the title.

Which essentially means that, unlike some of the surprisingly decent kids games we've seen recently, unless you're seven or eight-years-old, *BUZZ! Junior: Robojam* is simply not for you. The real fun of *BUZZ!* undoubtedly lies in its ability to test your knowledge across a range of subjects: that awesome smug feeling you get from knowing the answer to a question while everyone else is clueless is weirdly absent from the *Junior* versions, since it's so blatantly targeted at the children's market. This is forgivable, but it also means that you will most likely have zero interest in this game.

That being said, children will undoubtedly enjoy *BUZZ! Junior*, specifically if they have problems navigating the complicated PS2 controller, and in this respect the game is a success. Considering the quality of some recent children's games on the PS2, however, this might not be quite enough.

**Mark Serrels**



■ After success with 'Pinocchio' Gepetto got greedy...

#### WHY GET IT:

- Simple, easy gaming for children
- You want to use your Buzzers

#### WHY LEAVE IT:

- Strictly for 'da kidz'
- Extremely short lived

#### OFFICIAL SCORE:

**06**

#### VERDICT:

Unless you have a horde of kids, stick to the original, or check out *Buzz! The Mega Quiz*.



■ GENRE: STRATEGY/ACTION  
■ RELEASE: JUNE 2007  
■ DEVELOPER: OMEGA FORCE  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

■ PLAYERS: 1-2  
■ PRICE: \$59.95  
■ HD: 576i  
■ WEB: www.koei.com



## SAMURAI WARRIORS 2 EMPIRES

The end of a dynasty...



If slashing your way through epic eastern history is your bag, then you've no doubt come across one of KOEI's many attempts to bring super amounts of 'slashiness' and strategy together in harmony, with both the *Dynasty Warriors* franchise, and the Japanese-focused *Samurai Warriors*.

Sadly both series have fallen into disrepute as of late, as a failure to update an aging combat system has caused the franchise to slowly become a decrepit parody of itself. So let's just get one thing out of the way: if you're looking for a game that revolutionises *Samurai Warriors*' dusty controls and game mechanics, then look elsewhere. This game plays the same

way as it ever did, with a couple of slight strategic elements added for variety.

For fans of the series, however, the strategic element will possibly be the most interesting thing about this latest instalment, since it's the only new thing in the game period. Being able to direct and delegate to your inferiors is an interesting diversion from the bog-standard gameplay,

but it's hardly enough to save this title from being anything beyond mediocre.

Even fans of the franchise would be advised to steer clear of this one. If any series needed a makeover it's this one: the entire *Samurai Warriors* package is simply completely outdated. Our advice is not to bother with this uninteresting antique. **Mark Serrels**

PROS:

- New strategy elements
- You like this sort of thing?

CONS:

- Unbearably stale and repetitive
- Looks terrible

**VERDICT:** Back away... nothing new to see here people...

OFFICIAL

SCORE:  
**05**



■ GENRE: GAMBLING  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: POINT OF VIEW  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT

■ PLAYERS: 1(2-8 ONLINE)  
■ PRICE: \$49.95  
■ HD: 576i  
■ WEB: pointofview.com



## PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

## WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POKER 2

Anything but an addiction

Poker is the new hula-hoop. People watch it on television, they dabble in it with friends, hot girls play it. Unfortunately, like the aluminium cricket bat that made Dennis Lilee look like a blushing tit in '79, poker on PlayStation doesn't work.

*WCP2* strives to go beyond the cards and put you in the smoky foxhole, cheap green felt surrounded by characters that range from gas-mask-wearing nutters to four-eyed gerbil molesters. While there is a Quickmatch option here, *WCP2* flies the Career Mode flag that sees your card sleuth tackle international competitors whose AI is styled after a selection of

real-life poker pros. An online mode, with EyeToy support no less, rounds out the gaudy features.

Not that any of that matters. *WCP2* is still, in essence, hawking something anyone with an Internet connection can get for nothing, and when you consider that free versions of poker found online are more enjoyable to play than this affair, it indicates quite an issue.

The biggest flop of the venture is the contrived attempt to extrude synthetic personality into a game all about human nuance, high personal stakes, and pressure of thought. Watching AI hesitate through thousands of hands of poker in

a bid for realism will end up either being a form of new-age torture or the solution to insomnia. Adding to the vampiric pace is a ménage of tasteless jazz that'd have everyday folk doing the Chopper Read and lopping their ears off. Bogged down in detail and poorly presented, leave *WCP2* to the bargain bin piranhas.

**James Ellis**



PROS:

- You have no friends...
- You don't have net access

CONS:

- AI pausing over cards sucks
- Just play the real thing!

**VERDICT:** *WCP2* folds against the might of simpler, complimentary games already going on online.

OFFICIAL  
SCORE:  
**04**

■ GENRE: ACTION/DRIVING  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$79.95  
■ GAMESHARE: NO  
■ WEB: www.sumo-digital.com

■ BACK STORY: With Ubisoft nabbing publishing rights for the *Driver* series from Atari, expectations are riding high for a fresh perspective on the same ol', same ol'. Sumo Digital has had plenty of success on the PSP so far with portable versions of *V8 Supercars 2* and *Virtua Tennis 3*.

# DRIVER 76

'fro-tastic...

The *Driver* games of late haven't exactly been synonymous with originality. While the first game was a pioneer of the sandbox genre, recent titles have been content to more or less skulk around in the shadow of the *GTA* juggernaut – doted on by a dwindling troupe of loyal fans and lambasted by an increasingly fickle *GTA* generation (most of whom don't realise *Driver* discovered the third dimension long before *GTA* did). While Tanner and T.K.'s billowing chest hair have yet to seriously challenge the staunch awesomeness of Rockstar's revered car-jacking efforts, it's a testament to the series that we're now seeing the fifth entry in the line-up (sixth if you count *Driver Vegas*, which was developed for mobiles).

It's not so much a completely fresh offering as a heady remix of the PS2's

*Parallel Lines*. It's still 1976 (hmmm, who saw that coming?), you still step into the funkalicious boots of bad-arse muttha T.K., and the soundtrack is still a criminally groovy mess of tubby bass lines, disco inferno and manly soul music. So what's been worked over with a digital iron pipe? The story's been enthusiastically beaten into an unrecognisable shape for one, and even though it's a little on the thin side (considering the scope for an epic tale of one bad man being quite bad in a bad, bad city) it's a marked improvement. Set two years before the first half of *Parallel Lines*, T.K.'s prequel adventure offers a nifty plot as well as the ballistically fun you-vs.-the-fuzz moments which require an invariably hair-raising dash as the boys in blue try to reduce you to a crispy wreck.

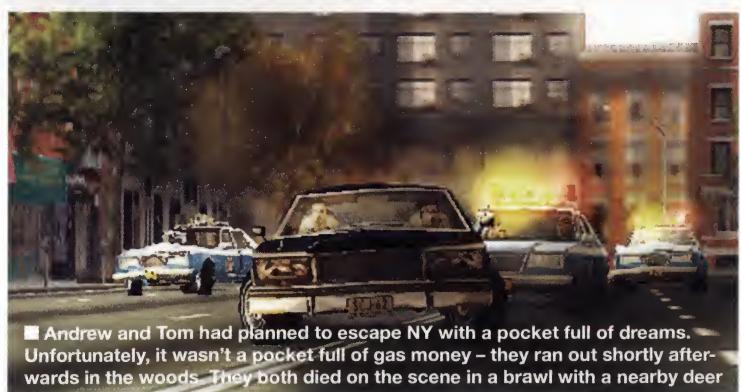
It must be said that if *Driver 76* does

one thing to absolute perfection it is the flamboyant modelling of all the vehicles lining the streets of New York – they look fantastic. Draw distance is mighty impressive for a hand-held game, and the lighting and damage effects heartily bitch slap the competition with their attention to detail and undeniable cool.

However, *Driver 76* still falters by appropriating far too many *GTA* conventions for its own good. It's clear that it succeeds as a balls-to-the-wall chase simulator, but too many familiar missions crop up to pad out the experience. They're not helped in the slightest by the fact that, while you're given a staggering play area in which to hoon around in, there's really not much to do. That said, *Driver 76* is a positive step and hopefully a sign of more innovative things to come. **Toby McCasker**

## A PACKAGE FOR YOU, SIR

With 125 miscellaneous packages to collect, that's a fair chunk of game time right there for completionist fanatics. Even though the idea is nothing new at all, the ways in which you get at them sort of is. More often than not, T.K.'s required to execute some form of death-defying, trouser-soiling stunt to get anywhere near the things, which is of course accentuated by dramatic slow motion and fancy camera angles.



## INFO BYTE

The *Driver* series debuted all the way back in '99 on the PSOne, and Tanner was such a fat-arse he couldn't even leave the car.

### PROS:

- Brilliant work on the cars
- Top-notch soundtrack

### CONS:

- It still needs to get over its love affair with *GTA*

## VERDICT:

Driver 76 breaks new ground for itself, but not the genre.

OFFICIAL SCORE:  
**07**



■ "Why do you wear that mask?" "Because I like to party"

■ GENRE: FIGHTING  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: SYSTEM 3  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: FUNTASTIC

■ PLAYERS: 1-2  
■ PRICE: \$59.95  
■ GAMESHARE: NO  
■ WEB: www.legendofthedragon.com

PS3 PS2 PSP  
**REVIEW**



■ Suddenly, Frank felt small and insignificant. Puko put his leg down, but it was too late. Frank had seen everything



## LEGEND OF THE DRAGON

There's this legend, see, about this dragon...



**B**ased on the cartoon of the same name, *Legend of the Dragon* would be easy to dismiss at first glance. We all know the king of fighters for the PSP is *Tekken: Dark Resurrection*. And if you've played through that, why there's the *Mortal Kombat* title waiting for you. If you've played through that...

Well, you get the idea. *LOTD* is on a lower rung of the must-have ladder than the rest of the fighters. Having said that, fans of the cartoon and those looking for something a little different in their fighters might want to have a gander.

The plot is typically complex but basically can be boiled down to two

modes – straight out fighting and quest mode. Straight out fighting is, well, just that – and can be done via Wi-Fi, which is a nice touch. The quest mode sees your character obtain the twelve widgets of the Zodiac or something, allowing said character to gain the power of said thingy.

In practical terms this allows you to

transform into a different warrior and bust out some different moves.

With 24 playable characters, interesting graphics and a decent quest mode, *LOTD* isn't quite legendary – but it's not bad.

Having said that, it's no *Tekken*. If you don't have *Tekken* go and get it now, please. **Anthony O'Connor**

**PROS:**

- You just love fighting games
- You're into the cartoon

**CONS:**

- Hardly reinvents the wheel
- All this mysticism grates

**OFFICIAL SCORE:**

**06**

**VERDICT:** A decent brawler that will offer value for fans of the cartoon but will probably wear out its charm.



■ GENRE: FLIGHT  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: TAITO  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT

■ PLAYERS: 1  
■ PRICE: \$49.95  
■ GAMESHARE: NO  
■ WEB: www.red-ant.com.au

PS3 PS2 PSP  
**REVIEW**



## ACES OF WAR

Asses of Bore...

**T**here is really no reason a game like *Aces of War* couldn't work on the PSP. The game's controls, for instance, are really quite good. The analogue nub makes a decent flight stick and with the rudder mapped to the left and right shoulder buttons it's easy to grasp.

But that's where the praise ends.

One of the biggest problems with *Aces of War* is that it bills itself as a simulation. It's certainly tough, you're encouraged to use the flaps to increase lift and make tight, slow turns without stalling and you need to keep an eye on your fuel.

Fair enough.

However, a simulation wouldn't ask you to destroy 80% of the vessels in Pearl Harbour, and the HQ. Single-handedly. With your INFINITE supply of bombs.

Of course, concessions must be made

for fun's sake. But if we can have a plane that never runs out of bombs, why can't we have one that never runs out of FUEL?

Was a time limit really necessary, and does it do anything but make this game even MORE annoying than it already is?

WWII boffins might be about to dismiss this and go right out ahead and buy this anyway, but they'll probably hate it even more. Even the bodgiest games can scrape by with some fan service, but *Aces of War* doesn't even manage that. We don't mean to sound xenophobic, but the bulk of the hangar is filled with Japanese planes, and there's very little in the way of classic aircraft from other nations. How Taito has managed to make a WWII air combat game without some of the most famous planes of the era is completely beyond us. Avoid. **Luke Reilly**



■ "Haha, the destroyer becomes the destroyed... what? Well, I thought it sounded good..."

**PROS:**

- You only like Japanese planes
- You like wasting money

**CONS:**

- You prefer fun games
- You prefer good games

**OFFICIAL SCORE:**  
**03**

**VERDICT:** Flawed on almost every level. Even the most bearded of buffs will find very little to like here.

■ **GENRE:** SPORTS  
■ **RELEASE:** NOW  
■ **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO BANDAI  
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4  
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95  
■ **GAMESHARE:** YES  
■ **WEB:** [www.namco.com](http://www.namco.com)

■ **BACK STORY:** Namco has been knocking out fantastic gaming fare for decades. It's responsible for iconic 3D fighting series *Tekken*, prolific 3D racing series *Ridge Racer*, and er, *Pac-Man*. Yeah, you eat those dots.

# SMASH COURT TENNIS 3

More green balls than a Chernobyl orgy...

In stark contrast to last issue's jump-right-in racket-ramp *Virtua Tennis 3*, Namco's *Smash Court Tennis 3* plays a much more technical game that will whip you to straight to match point if you attempt to take to the court without first sitting through its needlessly lengthy and somewhat tiresome tutorial mode. It takes itself very seriously, with an emphasis on dynamics that rewards carefully timed button holds and subsequent releases, and firmly chastises players for not boning up on the staggering plethora of shots available.

In theory it's a nice idea that should add a modicum of depth to proceedings, but in practise it's an unwieldy system that'll see you making quite a few fiddly hits that you're not quite sure you're meant to make. This is largely due to the fact that every shot is nearly impossible

to differentiate from the last (and there's no on-screen indication otherwise), so when a dastardly AI-controlled Rafael Nadal smashes back what you thought was a winning 'hard' backhand it's not because the Spanish court-swindler is entirely unstoppable, it's because you might as well have gift-wrapped that plain ol' backhand and cheerily tossed it to him with a sly wink and a cheeky grin.

*SCT3* also looks simply atrocious, with players sizing up the drab courts with cold, dead eyes and waving to the crowd with horribly jerky limbs. What's worse is that after each point you're forced to endure a few unendurable seconds of the graphically bereft players reacting to whatever's just happened. It's genuinely terrifying when you're confronted with lurching French giantess Amelie Mauresmo and all seventy square kilometres of her ogre-like jaw line

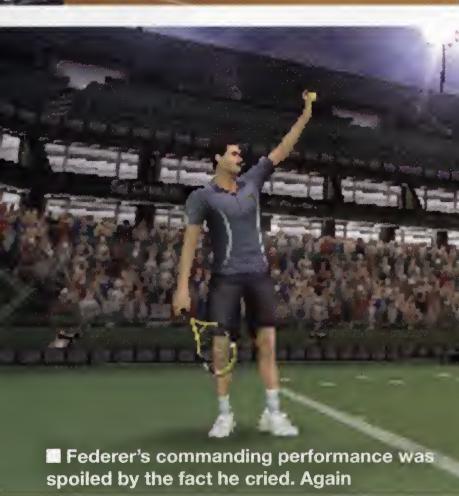
as she rocks her massive cranium from side to side in whimsical contemplation of the last person she devoured. Featureless juddering mannequins aside, the 2D crowds of Mexican-waving pixel globes are an eyesore that really detracts from any kind of tangible atmosphere. *SCT3*'s sound doesn't fare much better, with the same grunts and groans crackling from the PSP's frightened speakers over, and over, and over again.

And the less said about the ludicrously cheesy J-rockin' music the better.

If you can cope with *Smash Court Tennis 3*'s downright average presentation, there's definitely some interesting mechanics to get stuck into and all the big names are in there for tennis buffs to enjoy. It's pity about the complete and utter lack of fun, though. *SMT3* is too realistic for its own good. **Toby McCasker**

## LOOK AT YOUR WATCH NOW

Timing is everything in *Smash Court Tennis 3*. Thwacking your opponent's balls with a mere glancing tap of a button will soon see you trailing by miles and in the grip of a crippling shame spiral. No, the key to victory is a Zen-like approach that relies on gauging what the cad on the other end of the court is going to do and gearing up for it by choosing your shot and 'powering it up' just as the ball is leaving their racket.



■ Federer's commanding performance was spoiled by the fact he cried. Again



■ Dracula loved tennis so much that he had his own personal court built. Sadly, the crowds were always dead.



■ To intensify her strokes, she imagined there were two balls instead of one...



### PROS:

- Absorbing gameplay mechanics
- Cool customisation options

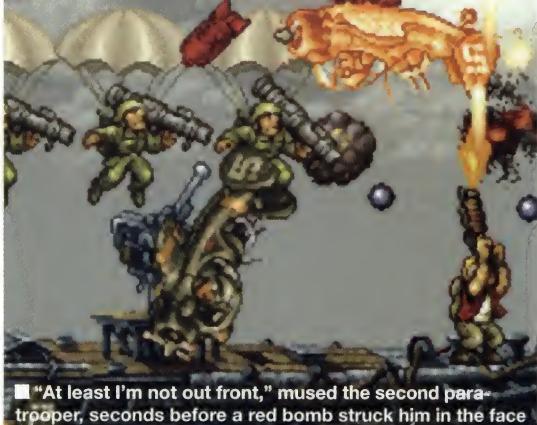
### CONS:

- Dear God, it's horrifying
- Terminally flat playing experience

### VERDICT:

No matter how 'serious' you like your tennis, you'd do better to give *Virtua Tennis 3* a go.

OFFICIAL SCORE:  
**05**



"At least I'm not out front," mused the second paratrooper, seconds before a red bomb struck him in the face

■ GENRE: RETRO  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: TERMINAL REALITY  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: QV SOFTWARE

■ PLAYERS: 1-2  
■ PRICE: \$79.95  
■ GAMESHARE: NO  
■ WEB: www.atari.com



## METAL SLUG: ANTHOLOGY

2D mayhem x 7...



**A**rcade babies will no doubt recall pumping dollars into at least one of SNK's spectacularly over-the-top *Metal Slug* efforts. The awesomely-drawn 2D characters and landscapes are only one reason why this series remains a must-play for any fan of wanton destruction – another is that they're quite honestly some of the most giddy blast-a-thons that you'll ever play, toting the same simple addictive charm as the legendary *Gunstar Heroes*.

You move to the right, you decimate armies of trigger-happy goons with an assortment of bigger and bigger boomsticks, and occasionally you hop into

a tank or donkey to wreak further havoc.

The boss battles are something else entirely, too. In a move that's supremely agreeable (and completely unprecedented), Terminal Reality has collected all seven of the *Metal Slug* games on the one disc, which roughly equates to an entire lifetime of thumb-crunching chaos.

New-school gamers might find the quaint animation a turn-off, but you'd be horribly remiss to, er, miss this. While the gameplay is intact and as blindingly fantastic as ever, *Anthology*'s only glaring flaw is that some of the extra content leaves a lot to be desired. Otherwise, it's a superlative package. **▲ Toby McCasker**

**PROS:**

- Wi-Fi two-player is wicked
- Seven games? You're jokin'...

**CONS:**

- Half-arsed extras
- Can be nail-chompingly tough

**VERDICT:** Do mum a favour and remember to eat something in between laying waste to all and sundry.

**OFFICIAL SCORE:**  
**07**



■ GENRE: RACING  
■ RELEASE: NOW  
■ DEVELOPER: DEEP FRIED  
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

■ PLAYERS: 1-8  
■ PRICE: \$79.95  
■ GAMESHARE: NO  
■ WEB: www.sega.com



## FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

Cars + guns = epic win

**T**here's some guff about an omnipotent über-computer called 'SAGE' that's taken over the planet because it's just so much goddamn smarter than everyone.

But putting that heavily derivative attempt at a colossal narrative aside, you're here for crazy-fast racing shenanigans, environment-totalling weaponry, and a whole lot of explosive satisfaction. For the most part, that's exactly what you get. Expect nothing less than precisionless, arcade-like vehicle handling and mindless machine gun chatter as you rev your gunned-up racer in a blazing attempt to either blow away your on-road rivals, blow up bits of the track, or

blow over the line before the other guys.

If all this talk of blow has got you thinking that *Full Auto 2*'s a bit like the vaunted *Twisted Metal* series with a shot of crack-cocaine straight to the thyroid then you wouldn't be far off the mark.

The problem is that, unlike its more soberly comparison, the pace at which things move along can lead to inadvertent prangs and sudden dismantlings that you're powerless to prevent. This invariably stuffs your chances for a win.

Frustrating moments aside though, there's a wealth of hugely enjoyable – if unashamedly shallow – road-raging to be had. **▲ Toby McCasker**



**PROS:**

- You're encouraged to shoot stuff
- Crazy environmental destruction

**CONS:**

- Grating weapon imbalances
- Load FASTER, dammit!

**VERDICT:** An intense ride that's marred by scant unfairness and a ropey soundtrack.

**OFFICIAL SCORE:**  
**07**

It's time to blow doors down for *Tenacious D in The Pick of Destiny*, James Franco takes to the sky in *Flyboys*, Clint Eastwood can do no wrong with *Flags of our Fathers* and more!



"This is not the greatest song in the world. NO! This is a tribuuuuuuuuute..."

## BEST BITS



### DVD OF THE MONTH

#### TENACIOUS D IN THE PICK OF DESTINY (MA15+)

■ STARRING: Jack Black, Kyle Gass  
■ DIRECTOR: Liam Lynch

**T**enacious D in *The Pick of Destiny* is a stoner rock opera that won't wrestle away *This Is Spinal Tap*'s stranglehold on rock 'n' roll movie royalty but will live on in basements, garages and dormitories around the world.

*The Pick of Destiny* is a fictional chronicle of the rock band Tenacious D, their chance meeting and their quest to find the Pick of Destiny, a guitar pick with supernatural powers made from the tooth of Satan himself. The Pick of Destiny has elevated common guitar zeroes to guitar heroes throughout the history of rock, and now resides in the Rock 'n' Roll History Museum. JB (Jack Black) and KG (Kyle Gass), brought together by fate and united in their devotion to rock, must

travel to museum and steal the Pick of Destiny. Deactivating a laser field with an erection, escaping the fuzz in a crazy car chase and busting a massive monster mama-jam against Satan himself are all part of the D's quest to become the greatest band on earth.

There's plenty of fun to be had on the DVD as well, with stacks of extra content stuffed in.

Keep your eyes peeled for a number of celebrity cameos, including Foo Fighters frontman Dave Grohl as the sodomy-obsessed, hard-rocking Devil, Meatloaf as young JB's overbearing father, Ronnie James Dio as a singing poster on a bedroom door, Tim Robbins as a washed-up rock wannabe and Ben Stiller



as a mysterious guitar store clerk.

The film never quite lives up to the standard of the musical montage in the first five minutes, but laughs rarely run dry.

**VERDICT:** Fans of Tenacious D, rock or weed (or all three) ought to get quite a kick of this film. If you're not fond of The D, or you prefer to listen to nancy-boy RnB crooners singing about their limos and their oiled pecs, steer well clear.

★★★★

## THIS IS JUST A TRIBUTE

**T**enacious D, or "The D" to their fans, is an American rock duo featuring musician/actors Jack Black and Kyle Gass. Their music is a fusion of classic rock with absurd comedy, topics ranging from their own sexual prowess to marijuana use.

Black and Gass, aged 16 and 24 respectively at the time, met in Edinburgh, Scotland during the Edinburgh Fringe.

The band's name was actually derived from a term used by US basketball commentator Marv Albert about the tenacious defense of the New York Knicks. The audience of the band's first live show in 1994 decided upon the name. Other possibilities reportedly included Pets or Meat, Balboa's Biblical Theatre and The Axe Lords Featuring Gorgazon's Mischief.

They appeared in a short-lived self-

titled TV show in 1997, and at a show in LA they met Dave Grohl which led to a cameo in the Foo Fighters' 'Learn to Fly' music video. The popularity of Tenacious D increased when they began to open for acts like Pearl Jam and Foo Fighters and they released their first album in 2001.



## TV

## SPACE GHOST – COAST TO COAST: VOLUME ONE

(M)

■ **STARRING:** George Lowe, C. Martin Croker  
■ **DIRECTOR:** Various



Space Ghost Coast to Coast is an animated spoof talk show that actually began way back in 1994. Not unlike *Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law*, *Space Ghost* takes an almost forgotten Hanna Barbera cartoon character and subverts it for comedy's sake. While it's animated, the guests are not. Coupled with the fact *Space Ghost* is a bonehead, the chats are usually painfully, yet amusingly, awkward. Interviewees in this first volume include The Bee Gees, Ashley Judd, Weird Al Yankovic, Bob Denver and Adam West.

**VERDICT:** Dated – but this quirky, unique show is hilarious viewing.

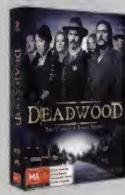


## TV

## DEADWOOD – THE COMPLETE THIRD SEASON

(MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Timothy Olyphant, Ian McShane, Powers Boothe  
■ **DIRECTOR:** Various



If you haven't had the pleasure of viewing *Deadwood* as yet, go smack yourself in the face. *Deadwood* is rough, gritty, ugly and in your face. It centres on a power struggle between Cy Tolliver (Powers Boothe) and Al Swearengen (Ian McShane), with Sheriff Bullock (Timothy Olyphant) trying to keep the peace as an election swiftly approaches. The layering of each character is impressive, as is the constant stream of swearing. We've never heard such blatant use of a term sounding surprisingly similar to "rock chucker".

**VERDICT:** Absolutely essential viewing – go back and get into it.



## WAR

## FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

(MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Ryan Phillippe, Jesse Bradford, Adam Beach, Paul Walker

■ **DIRECTOR:** Clint Eastwood



The photograph of the American Marines raising the stars and stripes on Iwo Jima during WWII is the most reproduced image in history. This film is the true story of the men in that photograph, and how they were plucked from service to travel the States on a propaganda tour. The trial of the men and their unwanted attention is peppered with violent flashbacks to the horrors of taking the island. *Flags of our Fathers* is the companion piece for *Letter From Iwo Jima* (also from Eastwood but told from a Japanese perspective).

**VERDICT:** A thoughtful and provoking war drama that examines the complicated nature of heroism and how it can be manufactured.



## RESIDENT EVIL: APOCALYPSE

(M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Alexander Witt

■ **STARRING:** Milla Jovovich



This sequel's story picks up shortly after the events of the first film and follows the genetically enhanced Alice (Milla Jovovich) as she aids a group of survivors trapped inside the quarantined Raccoon City, with Nemesis on their tail.

**VERDICT:** The HD quality is decent, but there's no escaping the fact it's a pretty rubbish movie to begin with.



## DÉJÀ VU

(M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Tony Scott

■ **STARRING:** Denzel Washington



A cop sent to investigate a ferry explosion in New Orleans discovers the FBI has a sci-fi device that allows them to see into the past.

**VERDICT:** The 1080p VC-1 encoded transfer looks pretty damn pristine and the sound is top notch – a great example of Blu-ray capabilities.



## FINAL FANTASY: THE SPIRITS WITHIN

(M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Hironobu Sakaguchi

■ **STARRING:** Alec Baldwin, Donald Sutherland, James Woods



This completely CGI film with near photo-realistic characters is a real dud. The cool animation isn't enough to save the wacky plot.

**VERDICT:** It certainly looks the part, and Blu-ray is the natural home to a movie of its type. But it still ain't really that good.



## ENEMY OF THE STATE

(M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Tony Scott

■ **STARRING:** Will Smith, Gene Hackman



A slick techno-thriller about a man on the run from the NSA with evidence of a major cover-up.

**VERDICT:** Scott's frenetic action flicks look a treat with Blu-ray's ultra-detail.



## WAR

## FLYBOYS

(M)

■ **STARRING:** James Franco, Jean Reno, Martin Henderson  
■ **DIRECTOR:** Tony Bill



*Flyboys* is inspired by the true story of the Lafayette Escadrille, a squadron of American pilots who volunteered to fight in France in 1917 – before the US entered the war. The story starts to plod a little when it tries to inject a little romance into the story and the characters are one-dimensional clichés (the grizzled veteran, the cocky farm boy, the cocky city boy, the rich guy who hates black guys, the black guy who befriends said rich guy, the odd religious guy, the snooty French guy with a heart of gold – they're all here), but overall it's a compelling watch, mainly thanks to its decidedly kick-ass aerial antics.

**VERDICT:** A surprisingly good war flick with some visceral WWI dogfighting to boot. Well worth it for action fans.



## TV

## EXTRAS

SERIES 2 (M)

■ **STARRING:** Ricky Gervais, Stephen Merchant, Ashley Jensen  
■ **DIRECTOR:** Stephen Merchant



*Extras* is a British sitcom from Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant, creators of *The Office*, about extras working in film and theatre. *Extras*' hook is the high profile guest star in each episode playing an exaggerated (or purely weird) version of themselves. Series two sees Andy on the road to success and features Orlando Bloom as a vain superstar who refuses to believe that a woman could not find him attractive and Daniel Radcliffe as an oversexed teenager trying to score with every woman he meets. David Bowie, Chris Martin, Sir Ian McKellan and Robert De Niro (if only briefly) also make guest appearances.

**VERDICT:** Well entertaining, but not as consistent as the first series.



## TV

## SCRUBS – THE COMPLETE FIFTH SEASON

(M)

■ **STARRING:** Zach Braff, Sarah Chalke, John C. McGinley, Donald Faison  
■ **DIRECTOR:** Various



*Scrubs* is quite possibly the last decent live-action sitcom around. Season 5 is one of the best yet. Turk and Carla prepare to have a baby, Elliot tries to get her old job back and the truth about 'The Todd' is revealed. Season 5 also includes a great *Wizard of Oz* homage (J.D. is going home, Turk is looking for a heart donor, Carla worries she doesn't have the courage to be a parent, Elliot doesn't believe she has the brains to lead a question and answer session and the Janitor paints coloured lines throughout the hospital) and cameos from Jason Bateman, Gary Busey, Mandy Moore and Billy Dee Williams.

**VERDICT:** Don't think, just get it.





■ "Spider-Man's balls! Jon Heder's balls... ewwww..."

## CINEMA

## BLADES OF GLORY (M)

■ Director: Will Speck, Josh Gordon Starring: Will Ferrell, Jon Heder, Will Arnett, Amy Poehler, Craig T. Nelson, Jenna Fischer

If you're thinking this is a celebration of Bon Jovi and the *Young Guns II* soundtrack, you might be confused. That's *Blaze of Glory*. This is *BLADES of Glory*. How's this for a premise? Chazz Michael Michaels (Ferrell) and Jimmy MacElroy (Heder) are two rival Olympic figure skaters. After a flaming misunderstanding, each man is stripped of his gold medal and receives a lifetime ban. Years later, through an absurd series of events and a glorious loophole, they reunite, competing as the first men's pair in skating history. Remember it's like 'My Humps' by Black Eyed Peas. It's provocative, and sexy, and nobody knows what the hell it means. That's its beauty! Opens June 21



■ "I don't have to use my tongue, do I?"



■ "I can't believe you didn't stuff a cucumber in your pants. That's the first thing they teach you man!"

## BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad

## THIS IS SPARTA!



Gerard Butler, who shot to fame in *300*, is set to star in *Crank* creators Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor's *Game*. Set in the near future, mind-control technology is abundant and an online sensation sees humans remote-controlling other humans. However, *Crank* was utter shit so our hopes aren't high.

## IT'S ELECTRIC!



Les Claypool (singer and bassist for Primus) and National Lampoon have joined forces for the jam band spoof *Electric Apricot*, following very much in the vein of *This is Spinal Tap*. Claypool will handle directorial duties. Expect a bunch of high-profile cameos including Seth Green and Matt Stone.

## YEAH BABY, YEAH!



After the success of the *Shrek* franchise, the rumour mill is buzzing with talks of a fourth *Austin Powers*. The word is that this one will focus more on Dr. Evil's side of the story. We're thinking Austin, Dr. Evil, Mini-Me and Skinny Bastard (since the big fella dropped those kilos) take on Scott Evil. Any takers?

## SMARTIE PANTS



Considering the gazillions made by all three *X-men* films, it seems logical that Marvel would look to spin off a few characters. In a surprising move, they've announced production on a Magneto prequel with David Goyer (*Blade: Trinity*) at the helm. It focuses on a young Magneto.

## RITCHIE ROCKS



Guy Ritchie used to be the dog's bollocks of gangster movies. Until he married Madonna, that is, and she put a Kabala hex on anything he's done since. Ritchie's next flick, *RocknRolla*, centres on a Russian mobster and a crooked land deal putting millions of dollars into play, thus attracting London's entire criminal underworld.

## COMING SOON

## OCEAN'S THIRTEEN (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: George Clooney Ocean and his crew team up with former nemesis Andy Garcia to take down a common enemy, played by Al Pacino. Opens June 14

## TRANSFORMERS (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: Shia LaBeouf The robots in disguise are facing off on Earth. Opens June 28

## HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: Daniel Radcliffe The boy wizard's fifth year of adventures at Hogwarts. Opens July 12

## THE SIMPSONS MOVIE (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: Dan Castellaneta The longest running animated series in history makes it to the big screen at long last. Details on the plot are very thin on the ground though. Opens July 26

# ULTIMATE PS3 GADGETS

Make your PS3 look and sound like Britney Spears did six years ago...



**SONY VGN-AR18GP**  
■ PRICE: \$5499  
■ WEB: [www.sony.com.au](http://www.sony.com.au)

This multimedia laptop has a superlative spec list, including a Blu-ray burner and integrated webcam. Features a hi-res 17-inch screen for your viewing pleasure.

## SONY WALKMAN A805

■ Price: \$299  
■ Web: [www.sony.com.au](http://www.sony.com.au)

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**SONY VGN-UX27GN**  
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the latest cool  
gadgets every  
month!**

## GOD OF WAR II

Conquer the fickle gods of Olympus with our handy guide! Boss strategies, puzzle solutions, hints and hidden goodies – they're all covered. Get into it!

## HINTS

- Try to smash everything. Red orbs are in almost everything, planks of wood, urns, etc. Smash statues as they may lead to a secret area.
- Take out imps on Cyclops, makes them easier to kill.
- All mini game kills give you more energy or magic, so try to do them as often as possible.
- Look everywhere.
- Anything glistening or shining is a grapple point or destructible object.
- Your Blades should be powered up first, then power up your Head of Eurayle and Atlas Quake magic.

## RHODES

**Secret area** – After the Colossus throws you into the pool, before diving, look to the right for a screen. Break it down and indulge in some fornication with two luscious Greek maidens. Press the right buttons for a tonne of red orbs.



## RHODES PALACE

**Puzzle** – Inside the palace, pull the pedestal to the left out and place it on the platform to open the gate. Kick it through and roll quickly under the gate. Put it on the second button to get to the red chest.

**Secret area (Urn of Gaia)** – Before you complete the above puzzle, after you get through the first gate, drag the pedestal to the right down the hall and break the statue and use the pedestal to get to three chests. One has the Urn of Gaia.

## EASTERN RAMPARTS

**Secret area** – Inside the Golden Colossus when you near the top, you'll notice some netting off to the left. Climb up it for a Gorgon Eye.



**Puzzle** – To cut off his eye beams, activate the lever to the pendulum and jump down. Hit a few times to get it swinging, quickly climb back up and hit the lever again. Make it across the rope as the pendulum blocks those beams.



## SNOWY CLIFFS

**Secret area** – After you meet Prometheus and leave him hanging over open flames, you'll notice an opening to your right that looks like a cavern with some crude stone bars. Two landings above is a chain you can shimmy down to gain entrance to the cavern. Inside you'll find two red orb chests and a gorgon eye. Nice! (note: you can only access this after you've acquired Typhon's Bane). Before you cross the zip line you can climb up to the left to get to three chests. One has a Phoenix Feather.



## THE HAND CAVERN

**Boss** – Typhon is pretty easy. Use the rocks as cover from his breath. Make your way to the shiny pillar and smash it to get to his eye. Once you've got his Bane fire at him when safe and take out any incidental enemies on platforms.

**Secret area** – There's a cavern to the left of Typhon with snow covered chests around a fire. Grab nearby enemies and throw them onto the fire to stoke it and melt the snow. You'll be able to get into the chests once you've done so.

**Tip** – To get Typhon to loosen his grip on Pegasus use Rage of the Titans on all fingers and thumbs to make him release your noble steed.



## THE CLIFFS OF LAHKESIS

**Secret area** – As you make it near the first save point after the second Pegasus stage look around to your left. You'll find two chests. One has red and blue orbs and the second has a phoenix feather.

**Puzzle** – After a short climb you'll come to a landing with wolves and some skeletons in chains. After you clear out the enemies jump up and take out all skeletons. One body will drop to the ground. Pick it up (R1) and take it down a level via the levered ramp. Put the body on the weighted stone platform to access the next room.



**Secret area** – After you knock down the drawbridge to the first island veer around to the left to find a Gorgon Eye.

**Puzzle** – When you defeat the first Cerberus, you'll need to make it to an out of reach ledge. There are four statues to the right, take 'em all out for red orbs and more importantly, the stone block that drops down. Drag it to the slot and away you go.

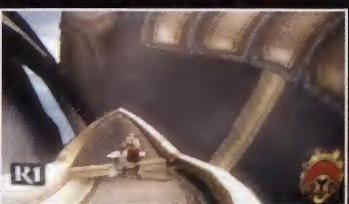


## THE STEEDS OF TIME

**Boss** – The Horse Keeper, Theseus, can be tough. Use your quick hits, time your blocks and if he grabs a hold of you, swivel the left analogue in the opposite direction he's swinging you. He'll jump above you to fire some electric blasts and mini icebergs erupt under your feet. Roll from harm's way and use Typhon's Bane to hit him. A few Minotaurs will come at you, despatch them with extreme prejudice and keep hammering him with Typhon's Bane to take him down. When he's hanging off the ledge, run up and grab him, swivel the analogue to pull him down, and mash circle to re-enact a classic Joe Pesci moment from *Raging Bull*.



**Secret area** – Once you've received Cronos' Rage, head to the right; past the save point and you'll find a chest with a Phoenix feather.



## REINS OF THE STEEDS

**Secret area** – Jump down the platforms on the nose of the green steed to find a chest with a Gorgon Eye.



**Puzzle** – To free the steeds, pull the green lever first, jump across and put the Horse Keeper's bracelet in the receptacle, then do red, yellow and blue. Two flying imps guarding the steeds will hover with the white spark on them so you can swing between steeds using (R1).



## THE DIVINE POOLS

**Secret area** – Just after the save point, enter the Divine Pools and you'll see a cracked tablet straight ahead. Smash it to uncover a chest with red orbs inside.



**Secret area** – Once outside the pools you'll traverse across a cliff face to a set of huge doors, make your way to the landing above and you'll find three chests. Two have red and blue orbs and one has a Gorgon Eye.



**Secret area** – As you go inside you'll find another chest with a Gorgon Eye on the left hand side below the entrance.

**Puzzle** – Near the chest is a pool with some plants in it. Move the plants to reveal an underwater tunnel, swim through to get the Amulet of the Fates. To get back up the top, stand on the weighted circle and use the amulet to slow time and jump onto the raised platforms, repeat this on the higher level to make it to the statue's lowered arms in time. Then knock the statue's head through the window to escape (don't forget the two chests flanking the statue for some red orbs and a Phoenix feather).



**Secret area** – Go down to the right and back to find a Gorgon Eye.



## DESTINY'S ATRIUM

**Puzzle** – To block the statue's eye beams, grab two movable statues from the right and left and manoeuvre them into the indents provided. The one to the left is easy to get there. The one on the right needs to be put on the moving landing after activating the lever. Jump up, and kick the statue over the step, slide it into place and move on to the save point.



## BOG OF THE FORGOTTEN

**Boss** – Quick attacks and Typhon's Bane work well against the Barbarian King. Stay on your toes and dodge a lot to evade his mounted attacks, and then hammer him. Once he's off the

horse, just stay on him and roll out the way when he starts swinging. It takes a bit of patience, but keep repeating the technique and you'll get him.

**Secret area** – Before leap frogging over the boiling pool, jump onto the vine to find two chests. One with red orbs, the other contains a Gorgon Eye.



## TEMPLE OF EURAYLE

**Secret area** – Outside the door to the temple is a hard to see chest with some red orbs.

**Secret area** – After opening the door to the Temple of Eurayle, look to the right for a Gorgon Eye



## RUINS OF THE FORGOTTEN

**Puzzle** – You'll get to a room with two buttons to open a gate. To the right is a body and a lever. Pull the lever and then break open the wall. Kill the guards, but watch out because they explode. Then bust through the wall on the other side. Go back to the right, pick up and drop the body in the water behind the original wall. You can't get the body over the spikes so this is the only way. The body will float around so go back and wait for it. Grab the poor, dead sap and drop his body on the button and jump on the middle one to escape. Don't forget to use Typhon's Bane to uncover the grapple point before you leave. It will take you to a red orb chest and a Gorgon Eye.

## RIVER OF THE FORGOTTEN

**Boss** – This petrified Minotaur is a piece of piss. Roll to avoid the boulders he's throwing, use Rage of the Titans or any heavy attack up close and watch out for the swinging arms, when  $\odot$  appears complete the mini game to finish him off. Smash the shining tree to continue.

## PETRIFIED PATH

**Puzzle** – When you finish slowing time to get past the water wheel you'll be on a plateau with three statues. Smash them to reveal a coffin and kick it forwards. Go through to end up where you fought the Cyclops earlier. Kick push both coffins into the columned area. The extra weight on that side will be enough to let you tip the whole bugger into the river. Go back and lift the structure and toss it to create a makeshift bridge to get to the other side. Climb the walls and smash any trees in your way.



**Secret area** – After speaking to the fallen soldier, smash the stone Minotaurs and head near the wheels. Kill the Gorgon and you'll find a red of chest and a Phoenix Feather.



**Puzzle** – To get to the area with the Cerberus take the body of the not-quite-dead soldier and use it to block the wheels. Then smash them to enter the next section.



Gorgon Eye, and then smash the symbol on the wall for a Phoenix Feather.



## LOWLANDS VISTA

**Boss** – Eurayale is a real bitch to beat. Use the Fleece to deflect her blows back to her and hit her hard and fast. When she jumps onto the columns, stay close and hit her with jumping attacks until you can grab her, repeat until she hits the ground. Watch out for her stone beams and waves, if the wave hits you without blocking it's instant death. Lay into her and use either magic until depleted. Finish the mini game to acquire her stony gaze.



## EURAYLE'S DEFEAT

**Puzzle** – This one is a lot easier than it looks. Activate each turnstyle and if you can't find a way through to the next section, look underwater for a switch. You'll come to a room with a stub of a pillar. Clear out all enemies and activate this pillar. Race up the ladder and use the Amulet of the Fates. Start swinging to escape.



**Secret area** – Half way through the puzzle at the red turnstyle, is a blank wall. Smash it for a Gorgon Eye.



**Secret area** – After you beat the *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* scene (just kill enemies and mash  $\odot$  to push the ceiling back up), you'll have to traverse across some planks and a ledge. You'll see a chain on the other side, cross over, and jump up as it leads to a red orb chest and a Phoenix Feather.



**Puzzle** – To gain entrance, use the Golden Fleece to reflect the Gorgon rays back and then break down the door.



## TEMPLE OF EURAYLE

**Puzzle** – When you go down a level with the rotating lever, leave yourself just enough room to jump down. You'll see a little room under the platform with a



**Secret area** – When you arrive back at the first fire-spewing door, go back down the River of the Forgotten to find a chest with a Gorgon Eye and another chest with a massive amount of red orbs.

## HALLWAY OF ATROPOS

**Puzzle** – To open the fire spewing door, use the Golden Fleece block to break through it, and walk along the ledge. Once you enter the room behind the door, you'll come to a few grapple points. Before hitting the second one, climb up for a Gorgon Eye and red orb chest.



**Boss** – Quick attacks and blocks are the go against Perseus. Once you get to the pool look for a shimmer in the air to locate Perseus and take him out. Play this one defensively blocking and hitting him with heavy combos and you'll have no problem. You've now got his shield.

## COURTYARD OF ATROPOLIS

**Puzzle** – There's a room with two movable statues, a round lever and a lift. Put one statue on the lift, and leave the other close by. Raise the lift to the top, and as it falls, wedge the second statue under it, and jump up to the next level.



**Secret area** – After defeating the two wolf like creatures, you'll need to push a stone block, pull it towards you and jump on it to reach a chest with a Gorgon Eye.



## EDGE OF CREATION

**Puzzle** – You'll get near a Statue of the Fates, stand on the stone to extend the bridge and slow down time to make it across. Halfway there's a chest with a Phoenix Feather on a ledge.



## FACE OF THE TITAN

**Puzzle** – Remove the first bit of spine, look to the left for a Phoenix Feather and red orb chest, then pull the piece through to access the next ledge.



**Secret area** – After killing another petrified Minotaur climb out of the room and glide to the left for another Phoenix Feather. Head to the save point, and hit the rock on the wall to the right to loosen it and jump on top to reach the grapple

point. Once you've reached the room with all the harpie hives take them out. Look for a path to the right as you're climbing the walls. This will lead you to a secret room with some chests, one containing the Urn of Prometheus.



## ASCENTION OF ATLAS

**Puzzle** – Push one boulder up the ramp, push one along the ground next to it. Push the boulders on top of one another, kick them to the far end and jump to the next level. Don't forget the red orb chest on the ledge to the left.



## PALACE OF THE FATES

**Puzzle** – After killing a few Cyclops the formerly ramped gate seems inaccessible. Grab the wooden plank jutting out to the right and drag it across until the opening is clear.



**Secret area** – After slowing time to fly across the right of the altar, there's a Phoenix Feather near the wall of flame.



## AUDITORIUM OF LAHKESIS

**Puzzle** – To get the translator, you'll need to drag the suspended stone block over to the weighted platform, then protect him as you drag him to the book, force him to translate it and then sacrifice him by smashing his face in to receive the Ram's Horn Key.



**Puzzle** – Defeat all enemies before getting squished. Atlas Quake works really well here, and a bit of Rage of the Titans doesn't hurt either.

## GARDEN OF THE GODS

**Secret area** – Phoenix Feather chest to the left of the entrance.



**Secret area** – After talking to the statues, you'll skirt a ledge. After the room with two chests, drop down to reveal a landing and ladder, climb them to get two well-stocked red orb chests.



**Puzzle** – Two walls each with a lever for flames. Attack three sirens until they have the grab symbol above them, pull the lever to roast, repeat twice and presto, the door opens.



**Secret area** – After exiting the blood pool, head back to find two meaty red orb chests.



**Puzzle** – This one can be tricky. Use the levers to line up the symbols. Then jump

down and pull the lever near the Phoenix to unfreeze a section. It has a globe in it. Drag it to the far left near the three levers. Then climb onto the roof and smash any ice stalactites. Drop down and position the globe to reflect light onto the symbols in the lower section. Then rotate the symbols until the light reflects off the brass shield symbol, thus melting the ice around the Phoenix. Then melt all sections to find many orbs, a Phoenix Feather and the door out. Watch out for the Minotaurs.



## HARPIE NEST

**Puzzle** – This one is piss easy. Eliminate each harpy nest by climbing the walls, keep rotating the lever until the grapple point drops and swing to safety.



**Secret area** – Use Icarus' Wings to glide across from this save point to find a bunch of red orb chests and a single Phoenix Feather.



## AUDITORIUM OF ATROPOS

**Puzzle** – Move the Statue of the Fates near the lever to open the door. Pop it open and watch the second translator jump off the cliff. Jam the statue under the gate and walk through the shimmering painting to the left to enter a time loop. As you return freeze time immediately and race to grab him before he jumps. Then give him the pleasure of being your second sacrifice to the Fates.



## THE PALACE COURTYARD

**Puzzle** – There's a large chain in the middle of the room you'll need to pull down while attacking enemies and avoiding the spiked roof. Use Atlas Quake to make quick work of your foes and keep pulling on the chain until you reach the bottom, then roll to safety.

## THE PHOENIX HALL

**Puzzle** – Activate the lever in the room of spikes and go to the left corner and smash open the suspicious looking wall. Go back to safety. Go back, slowing time to get each of the chests flanking the statue for some red orbs. Activate the crank lever to open the gate. Slow time again and quickly make your way over the chasms and slip through the gate.

**Puzzle** – Drag the statue to the left of the entrance and use it to shield you against the wall of fire. Clear the room and grab all the chests along the sides, using the statue to shield you (one chest on the right has a Phoenix Feather). Push the block on to the left button to open the gate. Jump on the right one and grapple to the hook once it descends and swing to the Phoenix's ashes.

## THE PALACE COURTYARD

**Puzzle** – Pull the lever and climb the wall to the left to access the two shiny chains and smash them. Drag the pillar to the edge and pull the lever again to reveal a room. Wedge the pillar in the middle of the entrance and pull the lever again. Go into the room to the left and drag the pillar through and the door will close. Climb up it and smash the last chain.

**Boss** – Hit the Kraken's left tentacle to reveal a button, put the body of the person you just killed on it to open the steam vent. Fly to the Kraken's head using your wings and attack. Repeat this until his tentacle gets stuck. Climb up it and hit the blocky part to hack it off. Repeat until the second tentacle is stretched across the screen. Jump up and claw your way to the block and cut the second one off. Keep hammering the two remaining tentacles grappling the stone pillars. Once he loses his grip on one, hit the other, then activate the lever to the bridge and watch his head go splat.

## TEMPLE OF FATES

**Puzzle** – Smash the crystal in the centre to stop the green haze effect. Grab the lever and pull it until it slots into place. Then swim under water and pull the lever. This part is tricky. Grapple to the crystal and grab the ram and release it to hit the first bell, slow time, then glide to the second bell and lift it to make it ring. The Statue's face should crack. The bells have to ring at the same time (the second must start tolling before the first one

stops). Reposition the battering ram with the lever below and heave-ho to smash the statue's face and reveal the entrance.

## THRONE OF LAHKESIS

**Boss (Lahkesis)** – Looks tougher than it is. Grappling to safety is your best friend here. Keep off the floor as she electrifies it regularly and keep swinging around her for an aerial assault. When safe, land and use Typhon's Bane, keep on swinging through her attacks until you can grab her and take her down.



**Boss (Atropos)** – Next her sister wants a piece, and you have the chance to relieve a moment from the first God of War. Take out various enemies and try to protect the sword. Use Typhon's Bane to attack her, and do it fast. She'll eventually collapse on the sword, grab her to continue this epic battle.

**Boss (Lahkesis and Atropos)** – The two chicks are now tag-teaming you (in a non-awesome sense). Fight Lahkesis as before and take her down being careful to avoid Atropos' beam blasts from the mirrors on either side. When you knock out Lahkesis you can use her to slow time. Do so and smash Atropos until she ducks into the mirror. Then smash the mirror. Repeat this until Atropos is done. Then concentrate on Lahkesis as before. Make sure she's in front of the central mirror to finish this battle.

**Secret area** – Climb the wall in the centre of the room and head around, you'll find an exit, and two platforms with many orbs to glide to.



## INNER SANCTUM

**Puzzle** – Hit the hands holding the door to make them release and enter.



## LOOM CHAMBER

**Puzzle** – Go left and axe Clotho's arm. Turn the lever and glide up. Climb the wall to the other side and smash the bodies blocking the gate. Drop down and turn the lever.



You'll need to pin down each of her three arms to continue. Hit her arm until it's on the trap door. Hit the first lever and it will trap her arm. Hit the second arm and take the chain to the next lever to drop the spear and pin her arm. Then drag the device with the cupped hands until it locks into place near the last spear. Drop the spear and she's ready to finish.

**Boss (Clotho)** – Use the levers to bring up some bodies which Clotho will pound. Hit her arms and activate the Statue of Fates. Then drag the handle from the far right across until it clicks into place (you need to smash the bodies above first). The lever in the centre then brings up a razor sharp pendulum. Turn it to trigger the end of her.



**Puzzle** – Keep pulling the various strands until you see your image in the mirror. Slow time and head back to the mirror, and jump through. You should make it with a few seconds to spare.

## THE SUMMIT OF SACRIFICE

**Boss** – Avoid Zeus' thunderous fists and take out the sirens as quickly as possible. Each one you grab and kill, sends a sonic boom back at the big guy. Repeat until he starts slamming the ground alone. Then hit his hand until the grab sequence begins. He's now your size. To take him out use the Fleece to block, roll to evade as he's pretty quick, and use heavy combos. You'll knock him near some pillars twice. Quickly hit **triangle** to smash him with them. Atlas Quake is a good one to use against him. You'll both trade the sword back and forth, just keep on him using magic and Rage of the Titans and you should be fine. Once he's in the middle of the screen, grab him to start the final mini game. And so the end begins...



## SCORPION

### 1 Scorpion Unleashed

Head to the facility via the web catapult and once inside, drop down and head through the passage to the right. Use wall crawling and stick to the shadows to avoid getting spotted by the guards. Activate the panel and take out the guards after the cut-scene. Drop down, pry open the elevator doors ahead and drop down the elevator shaft. Head left into the generator room and smash the generators to disable the electricity arcs. Then jump and wall crawl up to the railings above and head to the ventilation tunnel. Use Spider Reflexes to pass the fans or just disable them with your webbing. Once you're through, drop down the shaft ahead.

Head into the elevator, and at the top you'll be confronted by plenty of guards and security robots. Activate the arms by using the terminals at each side of the room at the base of the rams, complete the quick time event and head through the tunnel above. After this the facility will start locking down, so you need to move fast to make it through the closing doors. Use Boost and Web Zips to get through.

Bail out the window after the second door to complete the mission.

### 2 Mind Control

Sneak into the facility taking care not to set off the alarm by breaching the trip lasers, opening the doors at the security panel on your way past. After the guard trips the security to lock you in, take him out and use the terminal on the left to disable the security again. Head through the passage to the right and complete the quick time event to progress. If you fail, return to the terminal to deactivate the alarm and try again.

Now you'll have to fight the Scorpion. Favor heavy attacks and use your Reflexes to dodge his three-hit combos and you'll have no problems. Then complete the quick time event (QTE) and chase after Scorpion, using Boost Swings to keep up. Along the way you'll need to complete more QTEs to dodge the Scorpion's attacks.

Once at the bridge, use the same tactics again to fight the Scorpion, and when he's weak, press triangle and use his tail laser to destroy the field generators protecting the mind control

beams. You may need to beat him into submission a couple of times. Once the generators are out, grab him again and complete the QTE to take out the mind control beam.

## SANDMAN

### Pillar of Sand, Not of Society

Roughing up the Sandman's a fair task. Use plenty of Reflexes to dodge his attacks, but look out for the unavoidable moves marked by a purple indicator. Jump out of the way when you see these coming. Use your new Rage mode to maximize damage and complete the QTEs to add extra hurt. On top of that, look out for the trains that regularly hurtle past. Stay vigilant, and Sandman shouldn't pose any problems.

## ARSENIC CANDY

### Jurassic Heist

Web zip over to save the librarian, then head over to the museum. Once inside, head upstairs and take care of the gang members bombing the exhibits. Remember that the girls wielding hammers are vulnerable to

grab attacks. The museum is positively crawling with gang members, so concentrate on the ones standing on the upper galleries and use your Rage mode.

### 4 Bridezilla

Time to crash the wedding! This is another free for all, but there's the innocent groom caught in the middle of it all. Use Rage combos to deal with the waves of gang members, but keep an eye on the groom and move him as necessary. After several waves of girls, you'll have to take on Priscilla, the gang boss. Just use your Reflexes to dodge her attacks and use heavy counters to put the hurt on. When you've built up your Rage meter, really let her have it.

## DRAGON TAIL

### 4 Hidden Temple

Head off to the ambush and chase after the van. Get on it, take out the passenger, and you'll get attacked by a helicopter. Take the chopper out with webs, catch up to the van again and deal with the driver. Then head back to the warehouse and follow the police chopper to the gang hideout at the top of the

skyscraper. Head into the vent and fight the bad guys.

The first round is fairly easy, and can be completed using simple air combos. The next rounds are a bit tougher. Your best bet is to use flurries of light attacks to build Rage meter and let loose. Take care of the boss in the same way.

## THE LIZARD

### 3 The Hunter and the Hunted

Head down into the sewer and follow the passageway. Turn right and swing along the main sewer until you come to more dead lizards and a passageway to the left. Complete the QTE to ascend the spiral stairway and into the abandoned subway. Jump over to the other side of the platform and shove the train carriage with **Ⓐ** to block the tunnel and stop more lizards coming in. Once this is done, deal with the lizards on the platform, dislodge the girder that's blocking the opposite track and shove the other carriage to clear the way ahead.

Follow the tunnel ahead and go to the right, then wall crawl to avoid the electrified water. Once you're above the gate switch, lower yourself down on a web line using up on the d-pad and activate the switch to open the gate. Do this twice more and then follow the passage to your right and complete the QTE to ascend the shaft. Follow the passage to fight Kraven.

Despite having a few tricks up his sleeves, Kraven's a pretty easy fight. Just dodge his attacks, keep swinging and use Rage combos where you can. Complete the QTE and defeat the lizards in the pit to continue. Kraven starts using invisibility now, but your Reflexes can see the attacks coming, so beat him down

again, finish the QTE and hurry along after Calypso.

You'll find that she's used her magic to turn the Lizard into a giant beast. Avoiding his attacks with your reflexes, web him up with **Ⓐ** and quickly attack him with **Ⓐ**. This will put him out of commission temporarily and allow you to grab him by the tail. Spin the Lizard around by spinning the left analogue stick and throw him into the generators with **Ⓐ**. Back off once you've thrown him into a generator, because he'll do an unblockable roar attack. Once all four generators are down, his magic shield will go down and he'll jump around and attack with bodyslams. Jump and web swing to avoid the attacks and punish him when he's vulnerable. Once he's weak, press **Ⓐ** to trigger the last QTE and complete it to finish the mission.

## KINGPIN

### 1 The War on Gangs is over

After taking a shot of the press conference, head outside and get a photo of Kingpin. When the trouble starts, take out the thugs that attack to and head back to the Bugle to hand in the shots.

### 2 The Kingpin Must Pay

Once you get to Fisk's apartment, clean up the thugs he sends at you. Smash through the door to his office, take out another round of thugs he sends at you and continue after him. Again, just counter his attacks until you have full Rage and then let fly. Just be careful, because your counter timing is very important here, so keep your Reflexes on in case you mess one up.

Just when things are looking good for you, Fisk gives you the smackdown

and leaves you in the hands of the three gang leaders. This is a tough fight, so pump the Reflexes, use your Rage mode whenever you can and concentrate on taking out one of the bosses first – the Arsenic Candy boss is probably best, as she doesn't have as much health. As each boss falls, you'll get a health-up token, so keep at it until they're all down and go after Fisk again.

In the second fight with Fisk, use the same tactics again – just counter his attacks and go on the offensive in Rage mode. After he's weakened, complete the QTE to finish him off.

### Daily Bugle

After Brock tries to frame you, just use your Spider Sense to find his hidden cameras. Search the middle of the alley, the rooftops, the buildings opposite at each end and the alley walls.

### MJ Scare Ride

This one's pretty straightforward. While there are a few altitude changes and narrow gaps to negotiate, the Web Swinging skills you've gained so far should carry you through. To change altitude either charge a jump while you're swinging to ascend or delay your next swing to descend. For the narrow gaps, just use a standard (non-boost) swing to guide yourself through. Obviously, for the open areas, use Boost Swings to move quickly from checkpoint to checkpoint.

## SCORPION

### 3 Mechanobiicon Exposed

Swing after Scorpion down the tunnel, jump up the shaft in the warehouse and continue on. After the energy barrier goes down, follow Scorpion up the lift shaft by standing

## BLACK IS THE NEW BLACK

Around halfway through the game, you'll bond with the alien symbiote and acquire Spidey's 'black suit'. As well as looking cool as all get out and having an expanded move list, your super bar is replaced by a 'rage bar'. When your rage bar fills, pump **▢** to activate Rage mode. While raging, your attacks do extra damage and become unblockable, and you'll also have unlimited usage of your super moves. Due to its incredible effectiveness, you'll want to save your Rage for boss battles and really tight spots. Once you've completed the final mission (Grand Finale), you unlock the Black Suit and can use it to play back through the game.



■ "No, you moron, I do not want to go for a romantic snowboard ride!"

## MY SPIDER-PANTS ARE TINGLING... AGAIN

Whenever Spider-Man gets caught in a bout of combat, keep a finger hovering over  $\text{□}$ , because you better believe a timely use of your Spider Reflexes is the key to staying alive. If you see a yellow exclamation mark (! – means a counter-able melee attack) or a red exclamation mark (ranged attack), a tap of  $\text{□}$  will dodge the attack and avoid it completely. You can always just hold down  $\text{□}$  if you're unsure of the timing, but bear in mind that you don't exhaust your blue Reflexes bar by doing this. There's nothing worse than having an empty bar when you need to perform. If you see a purple exclamation mark, that's an attack that cannot be dodged. You can usually just jump out of the way of these. Also, if you're ever confused as to where to go next, your Spider Sense is the best way to get yourself back on track. A quick press of R3 will highlight any nearby enemies or important objectives.



on the platform and shooting a web line up by using up on the d-pad. Use your reflexes to help you time your ascent through the beam matrix. Step into the elevator at the top to continue.

As the next energy barrier goes down, help Scorpion take out the guards and follow him through the doorway on the right. As the door closes behind him, jump up into the vent above, being careful of the laser beams and crawl cautiously through the vent. Some beams will stay in place, others will flicker on and off. Observe their patterns and carry right on through, then just mash  $\text{□}$  to stick to the wall again if you get shocked.

After you exit the vent, take out the guards, head along the passageway and help Scorpion fight Rhino. Attack him from behind to cause damage, and back off when he starts glowing or yelling, because he does an undodgeable area attack. When he grabs the pillar, just stand back and jump out of the way when he throws it – this is a good chance to get some hits in while he's

winded. When he starts charging, just jump over and out of the way until he gets winded again. Now's your chance to attack him. Just be very careful to only approach from behind when Rhino's winded, or you'll get grabbed. Team up with Scorpion and complete the QTE to finish Rhino off.

### DR. CONNORS

#### 1 The Lizard No More

Head into the subway – you can either fight the lizards and gang members or just keep moving past them. Follow the on-screen indicators, save the nearby innocents and head down the grate. Drop down another pipe and chase the lizard along the sewer by Web Swinging after him. At the end, follow the passage to the right fighting off the lizards as you go – you've found Dr. Connors' lab. If you use your Spider Sense, you can see exactly where the serum samples are – grab all three and you're done.

#### 2 The Redemption

Head into the sewer and follow the on-screen indicators down. Activate the first dispenser and a bunch of lizards will swarm in. Just try to stick close to the dispenser when you fight and they should be too worried about you to destroy it. If you get too far away from the dispenser, use Web Yanks and Web Rodeos to get the lizards away from it. You also may find it easier to use your Spider Sense so you can see exactly where the lizards are coming from. Follow the on-screen indicators to the second dispenser and use the same tactics as before.

At the third dispenser, things get a little more intense. You have to hold out for two minutes and hoards of lizards flock in. They're pretty weak though, so just keep close to the dispenser and keep swinging with heavy attacks, using your Power Ultimate Attack ( $\text{□} + \text{△}$ ) when your super meter fills to clear the area. Again, use your Spider Sense to see where they're coming from and you'll get there.

### MARY JANE

#### 3 Thrill Ride

Not a lot tougher than previous thrill rides, but you will really need to keep an eye out for bonus hearts on your way along – they're vital to completing this mission. Other than that, just swing fast, don't stop for any gang fights and do as MJ says to get enough hearts to finish the mission.

### DAILY BUGLE PHOTO MISSIONS

#### Mission 1

This one's a complete cakewalk. Just swing around the city and take the shots requested, clean up the gang members when they roll into Time Square and head back to the Bugle to hand in.

#### Mission 2

Swing over to the park for the fashion show. Take out your camera at the end of the catwalk and get snaps of each



■ "Dammit! I've caught my chest hair in my zipper again. Yep, this is embarrassing"

of the contestants as they walk out, the winner as she's announced, and a quick snap of the loser having a tizzy fit. When the chaos erupts, subdue all the gang members and head back to the Bugle.

#### Mission 3

Swing over to the docks. To get the first photo, you have to get both the chopper and the armoured suit in the one shot. Stand well back and take the photo. The next shot is a little tricky because you have to scoot across the docks to get to the next chopper and shoot it and its cargo before it flies away. Your best bet is to head back to the nearby buildings so you can Boost Swing after it. When you feel you can get a good shot, take out your camera, zoom and take the photo. Head back to the Bugle to finish.

#### Mission 4

Swing over to the bridge, and then head over to a building to get a good shot of the armour. Once you've taken a 250 point shot (which is pretty easy), head down and take out the gang members quickly, and then head back to the Bugle to hand in the shots.

#### Mission 5

Head over to the marked building. A chopper will fly past with a stuntman dressed as Spidey dangling from it. Quickly swing over to the next marked vantage point, get the shot and head back to the Bugle. After the third shot, head to the fourth spot, where the chopper gets into trouble. Now, you will see a helipad on top of a building to your right – Quickly Web Zip over to it and look up to the helicopter. Catch the falling stuntman with a quick Web Zip, safely swing him to the ground and drop him off. Then, as ever, head back to the Bugle and hand in the shots.

#### Mission 6

Head over to the area where the UFO has been sighted. The challenge here is you need to take four photos, that each incorporate specific elements, namely;

- the UFO's vertical thrusters;
- the UFO's horizontal thrusters;
- the UFO mid-flight without its thrusters, and;
- the UFO hovering with its force field disengaged.

You can usually snap the mid-flight pic quickly before it tears off. Swing after it. At the next spot, if you're quick, you can get shots of its vertical and horizontal thrusters. Swing after it again. The UFO will head up to a skyscraper. Luckily, there's no time limit applicable, so just take your time and use the right analogue stick to sight the UFO, work out its flight patterns and use your camera to take the shots. Once you've got them all, head back to the Bugle.

punishment, New Goblin will get in on the action.

As New Goblin, use **□** and **△** to turbo boost your way to the construction site. Press **□** to initiate the QTE and then use the left stick to aim the fire hydrant to get Sandman wet. Aim at his upper torso and use the water to hose any projectiles out of the air. Once he's wet enough, just lock on with Cross, keep circling by tilting the controller and keep throwing bombs with **□** and **○**. Once he's been worn down, complete the QTE to finish him off, and another QTE to escape the sandstorm.

Now you're done with Sandman and ready for the final showdown with Venom. Use the same tactics as before with the piles of pipes on the second floor. After Venom's weakened, it'll trigger a QTE, but this one's tough – you can't get any wrong so prepare for some tense moments and a few retries. For the record, the inputs are **↑**, **⊗**, **↔**, **⊗**, **⊗**, **⊗**, **⊗**, **⊗**, **⊗**, **⊗**, **⊗**. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how you beat Spider-Man 3. ■

## GRAND FINALE

### Showdown

Head over to the construction site and take on Venom. The first thing to do is to jump up to the next floor and hit the stacks of pipes to disrupt the symbiote and stun Venom. Go on the offensive, landing about four hits when he's stunned and back off before he goes into Rage mode. On the second floor you can find a good spot that lets you go back and forth between two piles of pipes. After dishing out some

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# RE-PLAY

Think you've seen and done everything in your game collection? Wrong!

## WHAT IS RE-PLAY?

Re-Play is for those lonely games left on the shelf; those poor little buggers gathering dust. All they want is to be touched... caressed... given the attention they so sorely deserve. Come on people, don't break their tiny little hearts; even games need a second chance. Re-Play is their safe haven, their refuge. We want to explore every nook and cranny for the cool stuff you never noticed the first time round, or the second, or the third...

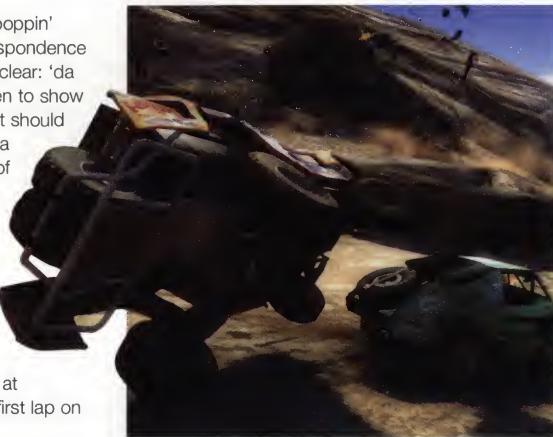
But Re-Play is also for the newbies, for the games that require our full attention, games that deserve more than a quick run-through before being traded in for a fistful of cold hard cash. We urge you to hold up for a second. Partake in one of our official challenges, compete against your gaming brethren in a reader challenge, look for something new and entertaining in your games, and above all, drop us a line regarding your gaming exploits to OPS@derwenthoward.com.au. We want to hear from you guys! We really do!



### OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

## MOTORSTORM

The *MotorStorm* challenge is on and poppin' people. We have been receiving correspondence left, right and centre, and one thing is clear: 'da kidz' are loving this game, and are keen to show our resident 'Stormer', Narayan, how it should be done. Yep. Naz swaggered in with a big grin after his respectable lap time of 1:18.47, but that smile slowly receded into fearsome growl as the emails dropped, and soon everyone was running as Naz went on the rampage. Some of the lap times were truly off the charts; needless to say we were very impressed indeed. Here is the top 5 – if you think you can beat these times, then kindly drop us a line at ops@derwenthoward.com.au. It's the first lap on The Grizzly that the challenge is for.



- |                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| 1. Chaz Newman   | 1.10:69 |
| 2. Dan Morris    | 1.10:94 |
| 3. Ryan Lockwood | 1.11:69 |
| 4. Kris Black    | 1.12:27 |
| 5. Heath Skinner | 1.12:56 |



### OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

## BURNOUT: DOMINATOR

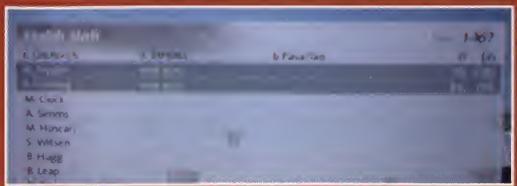
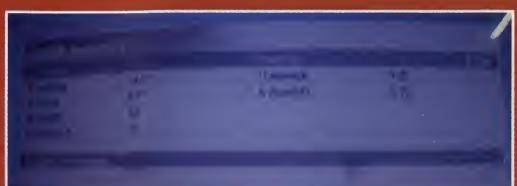
Sick of all the PS3 challenges we've had running recently? Fair enough. We thought we'd throw all you PS2 fans a bone with this new challenge on *Burnout: Dominator*, to whet your appetite for the upcoming sequel on the PS3. This challenge is as simple as they come. Head to the maniac section, and select the Bushido Valley forward track – your goal is to use all means at your disposal to get the highest score possible. We had a quick bash and managed to get a halfway decent 78,743, but we reckon breaking the 80,000 mark should be child's play for most of you *Burnout* freaks out there. Get cracking, and send the pics to the usual address under 'Burnout Challenge'.

### OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

## RICKY PONTING 2007

Alright chaps, Mark here, I'm from Scotland, so I was always too busy eating haggis, watching *Braveheart*, and tossing my caber to learn what the deal was with this crazy sport you chaps call 'cricket'. So please bear with me while I use all these crazy words like 'overs' and 'runs' despite having no earthly idea what the hell they mean... So yeah, anyway, Luke and Tristan apparently set a challenge for you guys to try and beat. The

deal was that you had to set up a match against England, playing as Australia and try and get the highest score in 10 overs. Apparently Luke and Tristan "limped to a respectable 5-149". I don't really know what that means, but it sounded good to me... until we got e-mails from Ben Sipos and Josh Van Kalken, who gave our boys a solid double clothesline to the throat with a ridiculous 2-253 and 1-167. I'm guessing this is good?



# CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Seen something funny in a game? Send it in!

## GOD OF WAR II

*God of War II* is pant-fillingly awesome, agreed? And the only person on God's green earth who could take Kratos in a honest to goodness, duke-it-out, fist fight is a man made clone, fusing DNA from Jack Bauer, Mr T, and Solid Snake into the ultimate bastion of über-manniness – also agreed? Well get ready to re-evaluate your lofty opinions of Kratos, and behold the man-god in his completely non-threatening fishy form as the 'Cod of War'.

Some of you may have already discovered this seeing as *GOW II* was released over a month ago, but if you manage to plough through the game on any setting, you will be instantly rewarded with the absurdly awesome 'Cod of War' outfit, enabling you to play through the game dressed up as a fish. Now sporting fish hooks instead of his Athena blades, it's important to note that this is not a subtle makeover. It's a full on, head to toe, call the National Enquirer, 'Kratos looks exactly like a fish' scoop. We recommend you complete *God of War II* in its entirety and check it out for yourselves.



## RESIDENT EVIL 4



Would you like to look up Ashley from *Resident Evil*'s skirt, and be consequently chastised by said feisty female? ("Would I!") Then follow these simple but effective instructions, and checking out the dangerously young Ashley should be a piece of deliciously sexy cake.

During the many times you have to rush to Ashley's aid and catch her from one of her pathetic little jumps you have a small window of opportunity to aim your firearm and have a quick gander at Ashley's green panties (yep, we checked). Just be prepared for the hell she'll give you if you get caught, calling you a "pervert" and such like. Hey, you can't blame a guy for trying!



## LEGO STAR WARS II

You better watch out and, in addition, you had bloody well better not cry, because Santa Claus is indeed coming to town, especially if you happen to own a copy of *LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy*. Because for some completely bizarre, batshit insane, reason players can actually play as old St Nick if certain instructions are followed. They go as follows:

Go to the Mos Eisley Cantina and

## RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

Well, we've played *Resistance* inside out, backwards, frontways, sideways... you get the picture – we've spent a lot of time gunning down ol' four-eyes and the gang, to the extent that we thought we'd seen it all in this game. Predictably, we thought wrong: we hadn't seen a Chimera busting out some break-dancing moves, getting all funky on the floor with a new style. Now, thanks to Mark Den Hartog, we have seen a break dancing alien serving up a dose of lockin' and poppin', doing an awesome headspin that we could totally do if we wanted to. Check these bad boys out...



**Pic 1:** Yo homie, you got mad skillz b-boy, b-alien, or whatever you're calling yourself these days. You should be in the 'Rock Steady Crew' if they even exist anymore... Recognise – word...



**Pic 2:** Taking a break from destroying humanity, the chimera enjoy 'chillin'', punctuating the festivities with attempts at the 'robot'. Although on this occasion it looks like he just fell flat on his face.

enter the following codes: CL4U5H (for Santa hat and red clothes) and TYH319 (for white beard extra). Then go to the character customization, fix the character up as Santa-like as possible with red clothing and a red cap, and then, in the extras menu, activate 'Disguise 3'. Congratulations, you can now play as Father Christmas in freeplay mode, and spread Christmas cheer throughout the galaxy...

# CHEATS

Get the winning edge  
with *OPS*' tricky cheats

PS3 PS2 PSP

## GOD OF WAR II

### Unlock Titan difficulty mode

Simply complete the game on any other difficulty mode.

### Arena Of The Fates

Receive Titan rank on The Challenge Of The Titans to unlock Arena of the Fates in the Treasures section.

### Challenge Of The Titans mode

Complete the game on any difficulty mode to unlock this mode in the treasures section. This feature is exactly like the Challenge Of The Gods mode from the first *God Of War*, except for the fact that there are seven challenges.

### Unlockable costumes

Complete each of these tasks to receive the different unlockable costumes available in *GOWII*.

### Athena

Play through the game on Titan mode.

### Cod of War costume

Play through the entire game on any difficulty level.

### Dark Odyssey

Complete the game on God mode.

### General Kratos

Collect 20 Cyclops eyes. You must kill them with a context-sensitive move, using the **Ⓐ** button to finish.

### God Armor

The best armour in the game. Play through and receive God ranking in Challenge mode.

### Hercules

Complete the game on Titan mode.

### Hydra Armor

Fully complete the game on any difficulty level.



PS3 PS2 PSP

## RATCHET AND CLANK: SIZE MATTERS

### Secrets and Special Items

Go to the Specials under the pause menu, then toggle them on or off.

### How to Unlock

#### Plundering Pirate Captain Skin

Six Titanium Bolts

#### Ratchetzilla Skin

Six Titanium Bolts

#### Tropical Vacation Skin

Four Titanium Bolts

#### Dan Skin

Win five games of Iron Lombax, Deathmatch and CTF.



PS3 PS2 PSP

## SPIDER-MAN 3

### Black Suit

After beating the main story collect 50 Spider emblems to unlock the Black Spidey suit.

### New green goblin suit

Beat the game to receive the New Green Goblin suit.

### Unlimited Hero Points

Play through the game and take EVERY boss' photo, but leave at least one. After beating story mode get any remaining pictures you haven't taken, and you'll get around 15 points. Save your game, reset your PS2, load your game and you should hear and see the Villain Photo complete and gain another 15 hero points. Restart the process as much as needed.



PS3 PS2 PSP

## MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION

### Cheats

Select Options, then Cheat Codes, and enter these codes.

#### Agro (special move for trucks)

dfens

#### Bunny Ears (On MotorBike Rider)

gethead

#### Faster Pedestrians

urbansprawl

#### Flaming Head (On MotorBike Rider)

trythisathome

#### Increase Car Mass In Arcade Mode

hyperagro

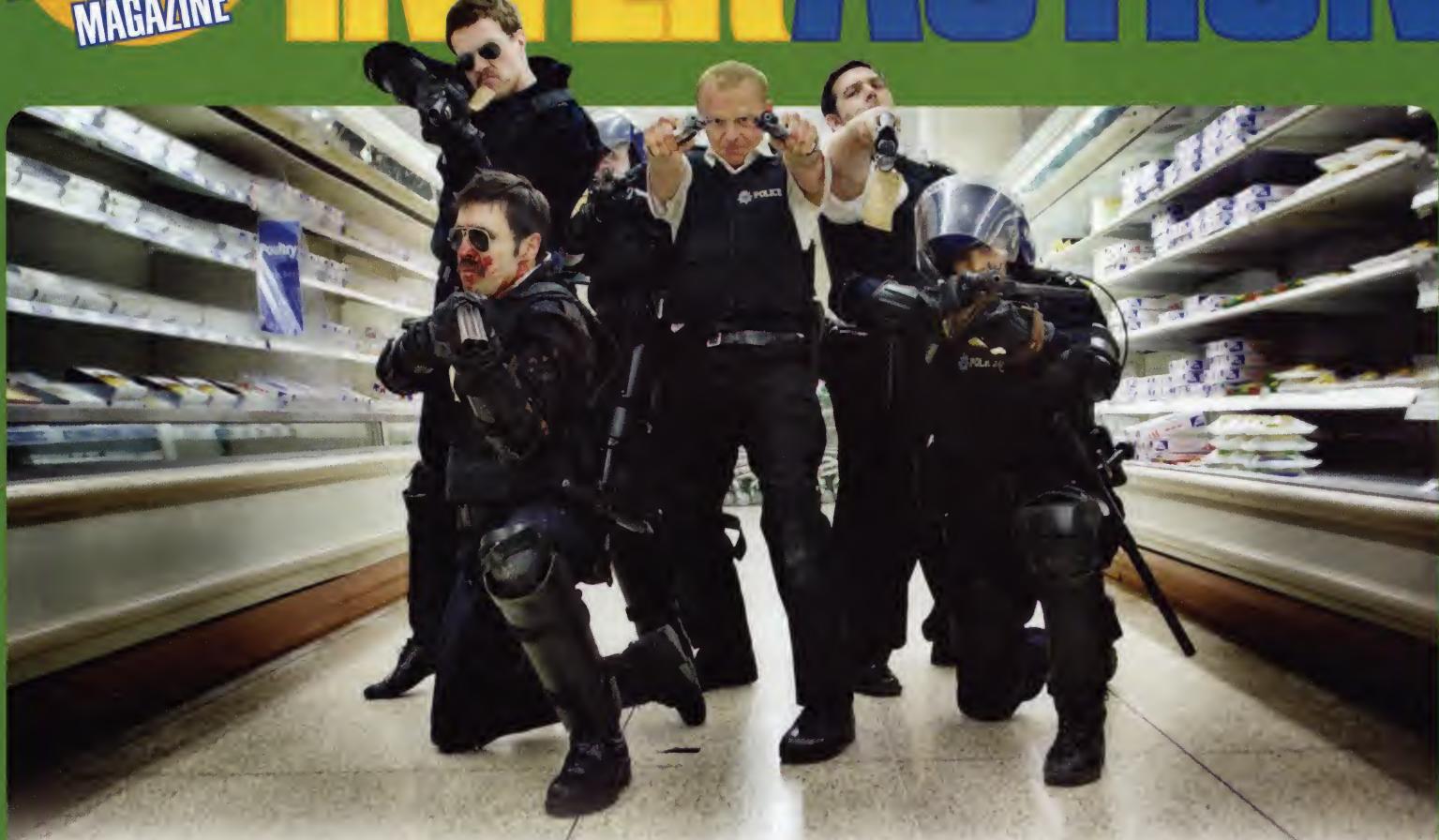
#### Unlock All Cities in Arcade Mode

roadtrip



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# INTERACTION



Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg, the creators of the classic spoof *Shaun of the Dead* bring us their fantastic new flick *Hot Fuzz*, the hilarious tale of 2 police officers. Nicholas Angel (Simon Pegg) is one of the greatest officers that London has to offer – he is actually too good and is making all of the other officers look bad! Cue his transfer to the quiet crime free village of Sandford and the acquisition of a new partner, the eager Danny Butterman (Nick Frost). Sandford however does not stay quiet for long and sidekick Danny gets the chance to see Nicholas in action, finally experiencing the thrills he has been longing for!

To celebrate the release of the clever comedy *Hot Fuzz* on shelves July 18th, BLOCKBUSTER® is giving you the chance to win an action packed DVD pack featuring *Miami Vice*, *Smokin' Aces*, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and a *Hot Fuzz/Shaun of the Dead* double feature.

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# ARCHIVE

All the games that matter on the PS3, PS2 and PSP!

## FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

### GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Release: October

It's almost too obvious to mention, but if you're not hanging out for Rockstar's latest opus, we'll personally come round to your home with a baseball bat and some lubricant – yeah... we'll go there. This game will rock the casbah – believe it.

### KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

Release: November

This game was only recently officially announced for the PS3, but if you were wise enough to frequent the hallowed pages of this mag you would have been aware of this since, well... frickin ages ago! Interesting concept: interesting game.

### COLIN McRAE: DIRT

Release: Late 2007

With a physics engine that allows you to make like a French driver of royalty and totally wrap your car into a wall, *Colin McRae: DIRT*, could end up being the benchmark for next gen driving. Should show its grubby, little face around spring

### TRANSFORMERS

Release: July

Could be good... you never know! Sure, movie licensed games tend to be about as fun as eating dog poo, but what we've seen of this game so far suggests that it may buck the trend. Besides, cars and robots: together at last, what could possibly go wrong?

## PS2



### BURNOUT DOMINATOR

The reduced price-tag is tempered by the lack of crowd faves like Crash Mode, but it recaptures B2's speed and B3's intensity

### EVERYBODY'S TENNIS

It's lifespan may be short, but it's possibly the ideal family game that will put everybody on level-pegging skill-wise.

### FINAL FANTASY XII

This is the most superbly crafted RPG out there. You'd be completely mad to miss this one.

### GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

No multiplayer or co-op, but a big improvement on GTA: Liberty City Stories. A fitting last hurrah. Can you feel it, coming in the air tonight?

### GUITAR HERO II

Guitar Hero II is arguably the greatest PS2 game of 2006, and undoubtedly the gnarliest music game ever made.

### MEDAL OF HONOR VANGUARD

A bit of a minger that fails to halt the franchise's fall from grace. Sticky controls and a lack of any original ideas signal a rushed product.

### RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2007

An under-featured update of the PS2's best cricket game, but still an absolute cracker.

### SBK-07: SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2007

A realistic and credible take on motorcycle racing, highly recommended for bike buffs.

### SOCOM US NAVY SEALS: COMBINED ASSAULT

A solid tactical shooter – but it lacks any real progress from the last SOCOM game.

### TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

A unique and innovative bargain-priced street racer that puts the ailing series back on top of the competition. For lovers of fine automobiles.

## PSP

### AFTER BURNER: BLACK FALCON

Cool, arcade-inspired action – faster than a whippet on 'roids.

### CHILI CON CARNAGE

Good humour, dodgy controls. This chili needs a few more habaneros.

### EVERY EXTEND EXTRA

A great attempt at mixing nostalgia with innovation that falls short thanks to confusing art direction and a steep learning curve.

### GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

Not only is this a brilliant game, it's arguably the second best GTA game available next to San Andreas. Get it now.

### METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS

Forget *Acid*, this is the game *Metal Gear* fans have been waiting for.

### PRINCE OF PERSIA: RIVAL SWORDS

A top-rate conversion that stands up to its PS2 big brother.

### PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6

Fun, easy to play and challenging enough to offer real longevity.

### ROCKY BALBOA

Likely only to disappoint fans of the movie. Shallow boxing mechanics and a general lack of depth illustrate an ultimate waste of the license.

### V8 SUPERCARS 3: SHOOTOUT

It looks good, it sounds good and it has a stack of options – but the handling is more arcade than sim.

### VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Quick, slick and a joy to play – just a few frame niggles.



"Faithful to the series and a hoot to boot – nice."

# PS3

## ARMORED CORE 4

## RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

7

10

A very respectable mech game and a far better alternative to *Mobile Suit Gundam: Target In Sight*.

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made.

## BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII

## RIDGE RACER 7

7

9

It's not without its flaws, but if you want a whiff of the air up there you could do a lot worse.

Faster, sexier and more gravity defying than Jessica Alba bungee jumping. The best *Ridge Racer* yet!

## CALL OF DUTY 3

## SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

7

4

*Call of Duty 3* is a solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter. Grab a copy of *Resistance* instead and wait for *Call of Duty 4*.

This is an absolutely terrible game. Atrocious controls, terrible camera, bestiality – avoid at ALL cost.

## DEF JAM: ICON

## TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07

8

9

There's a lot to dislike about this game, yet somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun. Holla back! And so forth.

A solid step forward for the best golf franchise in gaming. Tiger's never looked so good!

## ENCHANTED ARMS

## TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS

8

9

*Enchanted Arms* is the first proper Japanese RPG for the PS3 and it's by no means a disappointment, but it's a quirky game.

This Vegas adventure is definitely worth a look. A slick, gorgeous, accessible and utterly entertaining tactical shooter.

## F.E.A.R.

## TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

8

9

*F.E.A.R.* is a seriously chilling ride but the graphics could've been a LOT sharper.

Obsessive and gripping both online and off, *Double Agent* will gobble you up. Obtain.

## FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

## TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

8

7

Still one of the best two-player games around, with visuals that will knock the wind out of you.

Slick new visuals but still the same old skating and a severely downsized create-a-park feature. Neversoft needs to improve.

## FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

## VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

9

8

*F1CE* looks awesome and plays just as well. F1 fans, you have been called.

*VF5* is as hardcore as fighting games get. Serious fans – start rolling up your sleeves.

## FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

## VIRTUA TENNIS 3

7

8

*Battlelines* is a game that brims with potential but fails to live up to it. Shallow fun if you're up for it.

Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.

## GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE

## TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

5

7

Flashy graphics can't hide the plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

Slick new visuals but still the same old skating and a severely downsized create-a-park feature. Neversoft needs to improve.

## MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

## VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

9

8

It's next gen as all hell. On PS2 it was damn good – on PS3 it's a must-have!

*VF5* is as hardcore as fighting games get. Serious fans – start rolling up your sleeves.

## MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT

## VIRTUA TENNIS 3

3

8

A rubber Godzilla of a title that looks uncooked, plays stiffly and provides no satisfaction. What a pipe blocker!

Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.

## MOTORSTORM

## TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

10

10

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, *MotorStorm* is essential for everyone's PS3.

Slick new visuals but still the same old skating and a severely downsized create-a-park feature. Neversoft needs to improve.

## NBA 2K7

## VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

8

8

Technically the best b-ball sim on the street, but that won't mean much to average punters.

*VF5* is as hardcore as fighting games get. Serious fans – start rolling up your sleeves.

## NBA STREET HOME COURT

## VIRTUA TENNIS 3

8

8

*Homecourt* is the brashest, most addictive arcade basketball game yet. Instant fun.

Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.

## NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

## VIRTUA TENNIS 3

8

8

A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but still a solid racer and worth a look for series fans.

Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.

## NHL 2K7

## VIRTUA TENNIS 3

8

8

A snappy hockey game with everything a fan could want, unless you already own the PS2 version.

Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.

## WHY GET IT?

- Staggering amount of options and... stuff
- Amazing visuals, stunning vistas

## So many side quests

- Choose your own adventure
- Includes the Knights of the Nine expansion

## OFFICIAL SCORE:

10

**VERDICT:** One of the deepest adventures we've ever laid eyes on. Simply put... awesome.

# MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*

THE CONSOLE: PlayStation 2

THE YEAR: 2002

THE MOMENT: Just like all the games we've featured here over the past few months, the *GTA* series is so brilliant, so jam-PACKED with magic moments, you could fill this column for years without mentioning another game.

But there's one *GTA* moment that, we feel, has never been equalled. It occurred about 10 seconds after assuming control of Tommy Vercetti for the first time in the landmark *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*.

It may have gone unnoticed by some, but for many it was truly remarkable. It's a moment that neatly summed up the whole game in a mere few beats. You'd only just begun and you already felt like you'd got your \$100 worth already.

You walk over to your first car. You're already excited at the prospect of hours and hours of gaming goodness. You get in, the radio flicks on and the unmistakeable intro of Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean' oozes from the speakers – boom, tish, boom, tish...

No way, you think – grinning from ear to ear and pulling away from the curb. You cruise through 1984 Miami with one of the songs of the decade pumping through your stereo and wonder what were the odds of that track playing at the exact moment you grabbed a ride. It's magic because it seems like a wonderful coincidence.

But it's not. It's engineered. 'Billie Jean' is programmed to play the second you hop into your first car. But it's programmed to play because of the way it makes you feel. It's the perfect fusion of music and attitude. We can't think of many other games that have used licensed music to such great effect – that riff set a mood no amount of pastel colours and handlebar moustaches could on their own.

You really don't even have to LIKE the track to admit that there was probably no better way for Rockstar to thrust you into the '80s. Never before, and rarely since, has the marriage between the music and gameplay been so perfect.

NEXT



# NEED FOR **SPEED** PRO STREET

We head trackside to get the scoop on  
*Need For Speed's* radical new direction!

- 
- World's first PS3 demo disc – with four new PS3 demos!
  - Exclusive preview of Sony's 2007 PS3 blockbusters!
  - We travel to San Diego for the full lowdown on *Juiced 2*!

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## BABES

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Paris Wallpaper

PA75984  
Paris Video



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TRUE TONES	FULL LENGTH	ARTIST / TITLE
PA 43329	PA 46006	Avril Lavigne - Girlfriend
PA 43258	PA 43258	Christina Aguilera - Candyman
PA 43318	PA 46943	Fergie Feat. Ludacris - Glamorous
PA 43400	PA 42933	Dean Geyer - If You Don't Mean It
PA 43253	PA 42554	Gwen Stefani Feat. Akon - The Sweet Escape
PA 43242	PA 46944	Mika - Grace Kelly
PA 43338	PA 46013	Beyonce Feat. Shakira - Beautiful Liar
PA 43330	PA 46007	Plink - Leave Me Alone (I'm Lonely)
PA 43340	PA 46030	Linkin Park - What I've Done
PA 43309	PA 46030	Silverchair - Straight Lines
PA 43409	PA 42524	Justin Timberlake - What Goes Around...
PA 43367	PA 46007	Missy Higgins - Steer
PA 43358	PA 46007	Maroon 5 - Makes Me Wonder
PA 43249	PA 43249	Fall Out Boy - This Ain't A Scene, It's An...
PA 43424	PA 46007	Good Charlotte - Keep Your Hands Off...
PA 43188	PA 46007	Nelly Furtado - All Good Things (come To...)
PA 43261	PA 43261	Akon Feat. Snoop Dogg - I Wanna Love You
PA 43410	PA 46007	Chris Daughtry - It's Not Over
PA 42711	PA 46007	Ki Tuntall - Suddenly I See
PA 43314	PA 43302	Timbaland Feat. Nelly Furtado & JT



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